Between the Pines and the Silence

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Between the Pines and the Silence

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Summary

With a wedding on the horizon, a devastating fiancé, and another kitchen refurbishment underway, Hannibal finds himself in the unusual position of being uncertain of his own deserving. Will seems too good to be true, wholly accepting and understanding, as well as ceaselessly surprising.

When his secrets put unexpected and unwelcome space between them, Hannibal must decide whether to close it, or risk casting Will adrift.

This is the sequel to our fic, 'A Past of Plank and Nail', we really recommend you read that first. It is a completed work that will post Mondays and Thursdays.

Notes

Here it is, finally! These two needed a honeymoon phase, so to speak, and we hope you enjoy. Thanks for everything ♥

L & Deadly xo

Chapter 1

"The bloodthirsty spring
has awakened in the woods.
The foxes start from their earths,
the serpents drink the dew,
and I go with you in the leaves
between the pines and the silence,
asking myself how and when
I will have to pay for my luck."

- Pablo Neruda, *Amor*

“Hannibal,” Will calls out as he slams the tailgate of his truck. He sees movement on the front porch of their house, and it doesn't look like one of the dogs. “I thought you had office hours today.”

Hannibal rises from his seat at the patio furniture, where he’s clearly been making the most of the dwindling sunlight to do some office work on his laptop. He looks like autumn itself, all in rich oxbloods and woodsy colors. Will thinks he seems to adapt to the atmosphere around him.

“My patient cancelled first thing. An emergency of some sort.”

“Sorry to hear that. You've been here all day?”

“No, just for a couple of hours. I sent you a message.” He gives Will a little, enquiring smile: is there a problem?

Will echoes it apologetically. “Sorry I didn't see it.”

“I just didn't want you to be surprised. I've walked the dogs.”

“Oh. Thank you.”

Will warms at the image of Hannibal donning the shoes he deems acceptable for such a task, and the neat tweed jacket and jumper combination he sports, looking for all the world like he’s in his natural habitat.

Smiling, Will sets his bag inside the kitchen door and lets the dogs all out to mill around their legs, then goes to give Hannibal a kiss. That first lean into affection, away from the feeling of being ambushed, is good progress: Hannibal lives here now, Will has to remember. He's always happy when he remembers it.

“How was your day? You’re home early too.” Hannibal’s smile crinkles the skin around his eyes this time, little tiger stripes of pleasure.

“The tiles I ordered didn’t come, so I had to make myself useful doing other things, can’t carry on with some aspects until the floor is in, but the electrician had done a decent enough job for me to get the oven installed in the new tower.”

“Productive despite delay, as usual. I started dinner,” Hannibal says, with a small moue that suggests Will's modest kitchen has betrayed him again, despite now housing most of Hannibal's fine kitchenware.

Will shrugs apologetically. “What's on the menu?”

“Braised pork shoulder, and cheese soufflé.”

Sounds weird, Will thinks. He'll probably love it. “Great. Comin’ in?”

“Of course,” Hannibal murmurs.

They corral the dogs inside between them, Hannibal taking expert care to avoid swishing tails. Will checks their food bowls, and when he sees them still stacked on the counter, he goes to feed the pack. They flog him on the back porch again. Will looks back into the cramped kitchen and muses that it really might be time for an extension.

Of course, that's the plan. But - well, they've been busy. Alana had gently talked them into waiting to get all the proper paperwork in order before getting married, and it had only been Mischa not being able to get back in time that had secured the deal.

He can tell Hannibal is impatient, but charmingly so. It's shockingly mutual.

In the meantime, he moved into the house, and consequentially a good portion of his or Will’s furniture was sold or relegated to storage in the process. Currently it’s a mish-mash of their ‘essentials’. Hannibal’s definition is rather different than Will’s, and he’s noticed some new things starting to sneak into the fold: paintings, curtains, things that Will isn’t convinced ever existed in Hannibal’s old house – but Hannibal’s alibi is plausible deniability.

No sensible old second-hand bookcase Will got at a yard sale now, and no camp bed in the living area. The chairs are distributed in a more appropriate fashion, Will’s fly-tying workstation has been moved to the corner of the workshop, and his battered piano has also been sequestered away in there to accommodate the harpsichord. Truthfully, things are cramped, and Will has been meaning to do something about it.

In turn, Hannibal has been reluctant to unpack fully until the kitchen is done – or indeed started. Will can't entirely say he blames him, but he's not sure the boxes don't bother Hannibal more, some in the workshop, some in the spare room. Will is about ready to unpack them himself, Hannibal wouldn’t like that either, would he?

Maybe he'll offer to help this weekend, Will thinks. Or - he could start the kitchen refit, now his shoulder is feeling better.

“Hannibal,” he says quietly. He watches him look up, his fiancé, cut from burnished bronze and smooth as glass.

“Will?”

“I'll clear my schedule tomorrow and start on the kitchen refurb,” he murmurs.

A surprised glance at that. “I thought you wanted to wait until after the ceremony-?”

“I want you to be happy more.”

“I am transcendently happy,” Hannibal says, honestly.

Will feels his face soften. “Happier, then,” he corrects.

“Ah, Will. I'm not sure I could be -”

“Except with a custom kitchen,” Will teases gently.

An impish little curl at the corner of Hannibal's mouth speaks of his great fondness, as well as amusement at Will's correct assessment. Will crosses the room to wrap his arms around him. He loves the way Hannibal is so ready to receive him. He always is.

“I want you to have a kitchen you don't hate cooking in, seeing as you cook in it every day, and don't seem to show signs of stopping.”

“And I won't,” Hannibal smiles.

“As I deduced.” Will has to kiss him again.

Hannibal cups his cheeks to keep him close. “I heard from my realtor today. Three viewings on the Baltimore property.”

“Good. I'm just surprised it's not more.”

“That was just today. She thinks they will make an offer.” Hannibal smiles, and Will follows suit.

“The kitchen is clearly the main selling point.”

“Naturally.” They exchange wry grins.

“I like it out here with you,” Hannibal assures him softly. “And Mischa will love visiting.”

“Still, it's a little small for two. Nine. Is it?”

“I have no desire to be apart from you,” Hannibal murmurs.

Will's eyebrows raise. “Hannibal... I'm talking about an extension, not separation.” He tweaks Hannibal's collar. “You could have an office again.”

“You mean rather a more ambitious project than just the kitchen, I take it.”

Will smiles. “I had an architect friend draw something up for me. Want to see it?”

“I would love to.” He checks the kitchen clock. “Dinner will be twenty minutes or so.”

“Perfect.” Will gets his laptop out and sets it up to show the work Peter sent through.

Hannibal comes and joins him at the table. He doesn't speak as they look over the plans, just listening intently to Will as he explains the plans for a new conservatory-roofed extension; converting the spare room into Hannibal's study, the downstairs more open plan. It can be done in stages, he explains.

“Underfloor heating will take care of any major issues with temp control in the extension,” Will adds, “and when it rains it will sound like heaven is falling.”

Hannibal smiles at that. “Beautiful. I'd like a skylight putting into the study, too.”

“Of course.”

“And I'd like to redecorate the master bedroom - but I'll hire someone for that. If that suits you, of course.”

“I trust your taste,” Will says mildly.

“We will pick everything together.”

It's reassuring, to know that Hannibal wants him involved even in that. Will has a definite sense of style - he has to, with the furniture he builds - but he's never bothered with much here at the house. Hannibal... seems intent on making it their home. That suits Will fine. He's not sure he would care to have a home, without Hannibal. Not a real one.

“Want a drink?” he says, leaving Hannibal to peruse over the designs again.

“I left a bottle of wine on the counter to breathe,” Hannibal murmurs distractedly.

“I'll get you some.” Will touches his waist as he goes. He likes how Hannibal is poring over the plans. He'd been careful about them - and he really does think Hannibal will like it when it's done. It will fit the style of the house, but still have the more formal touches his fiancé is fond of. “Fiancé,” Will muses aloud, “I'm still not used to it.”

“I like hearing it myself,” Hannibal murmurs, smiling when Will brings him wine. They chink glasses gently. Will lets Hannibal reel him closer by the front of his shirt. “I have a request.”

“Yes, darling?” Will raises a brow: not much good comes of that sentence, in his experience.

“I would like to visit Madame Varma again, to get our suits fitted for the ceremony.” Hannibal fingers the buttons on Will's shirt, not looking at him. “If that would be agreeable to you.”

Will wasn't aware that he needed a new suit for this - he certainly wouldn't have had time if they'd eloped like they'd originally planned. He instinctively wants to dig his heels in about it. But it's a simple thing to do, to please Hannibal.

“What kind of suit were you thinking?”

“Something summery, that we could wear again for our honeymoon, when we go.”

“You're gonna wear it twice? So no white lace?” Will grins.

“A fine suit is timeless,” Hannibal says severely.

“I know, I know. But it will still be a waste on me.”

“If I can see you in it, surely that's not a waste.”

Biting his lip to stifle further argument, Will nods. “Okay. We'll go.”

Thinking of Hannibal looking at him never fails to make his skin heat, and Will hovers on the thought for a minute, allowing himself to be appetized by it.

Hannibal dimples, pleasure shining out of his eyes. “I'll make the appointment.”

How is Will meant to resist that, ever? “All right. I promise not to have a panic attack this time.”

Hannibal wraps an arm around his waist and squeezes. He noses close, angling again. Will obliges him. His kisses are warm and thankful.

“Show me your ideas for our room, then.”

Hannibal nuzzles him one more time and then goes to retrieve his iPad. Will sits down with his wine, and wonders how long his balding couch will survive this redecorating scheme. Probably not long.

“Nice knowing you,” he tells it idly.

Hannibal raises an eyebrow when he comes back over. Will affects innocence and pats the couch next to him. With a pert smile, Hannibal sits, waking the tablet and tapping to his project app. He hands it over when it's ready. "I'm thinking inky blue."

"All four walls?" he asks, scanning the swatches.

"Not as such. I was thinking an accent wall." Will waits for him to elaborate, and Hannibal flicks to the next slide. "Oxidized copper sheeting on the back wall."

Will nods, studying the photos. "It'll smell like a penny."

Hannibal chuckles. "Not properly treated, it won't."

"You've been doing your research."

"As is my wont." He taps to a different folder. "Headboards."

Will shifts agreeably to look. "What's wrong with the one you have?"

"Nothing. But I want this to reflect your style too."

"I don’t think we’ll see eye-to-eye," Will muses.

Hannibal's lips twitch. "I don't think that's quite true."

"I have one like this in the shop, you know," Will taps the screen.

"May I see it?"

Will stands up and offers Hannibal a hand. They head out, Will whistling the dogs out with them. They could use a bit of a run. Will watches Hannibal walk amidst the pack, hand skimming Winston's tail as they dart past, his expression warm.

Will opens the barn doors and flips on the lights when they get there. Now that the autumn is settling in, it's shorter workable hours out here without them. Hannibal looks around, like it has only just occurred to him that this is essentially an outdoor space.

"You'll need in here renovating too, I'd hazard. Some insulation on the walls. Perhaps under-floor heating in here too."

Will just laughs. "House first, all right?"

Hannibal concedes with only a small, smiling shrug. Will leads him over to the storage section of the barn and pulls a tarp-draped piece away from the wall. The headboard he's been working on is slightly more fanciful than his usual bread-and-butter, sturdy lines but with Art Deco influence in the shapes. He'd found some beautiful reclaimed mahogany at one of his usual suppliers.

Hannibal surveys it for a moment, smiling. "It is similar," he murmurs, "but far superior."

"Similar to what?"

"To my reference image. Will you sell it to me for the house?"

"I will give it to you, because you are my betrothed," Will chuckles.

"My wedding present," Hannibal murmurs, sounding soft.

"Well, I was thinking your wedding present from me might be a kitchen." Will grins. "Or a ring."

"Perhaps we could come to an agreement," Hannibal smirks.

"Oh right?" He raises a brow at Hannibal. "You want all three. What do I get?"

"Massages, my cooking, and of course a ring of your own?"

"That seems fair." Will pretends to debate a moment longer. "Maybe I could add one more thing to my list of requirements?"

"Of course you can, darling."

With a grin, Will tugs Hannibal in gently by his tie. "I don't think our wedding would be complete without it."

"My tie?" Hannibal says, clearly amused.

"Oh yeah, this red paisley number is a matrimonial must. Come on," he snickers.

"Mm, yes, this is definitely a requirement for the wedding."

"I had assumed so." Hannibal strokes along his collarbones. "We actually might need to discuss the wedding itself at some point."

"You know I just want simple."

"Of course. Any thoughts on location?"

"The courthouse is out of the question?"

Meeting Will's gaze steadily, Hannibal dips his chin. "It seems a shame not to plan something more special now that time is no longer of the essence."

Will has definitely been avoiding this conversation. He must pull a face, because Hannibal's upper lip twitches minutely as he waits.

"Can we do it outside, then?" Will asks.

"Outside where?"

"A park, maybe? Or even here?"

Hannibal looks around, considering. "We would need a marquee."

"All we need is an officiant, and witnesses," Will says, but he also knows Hannibal.

"Mischa is coming, and - well. I have mentioned it to my aunt and uncle, too."

Will bites his lip, because he doesn't have family, but. "Alana and Beverly," he murmurs.

"Anyone else?" Hannibal asks, very gently.

He thinks about it for a moment longer. Maybe Peter, if Peter would even leave his house for it. He could ask. "I'll write up a list. It'll be really small." He says it hopefully.

"Yes it will," Hannibal agrees. "That's what I want as well." He touches Will's waist, watching him carefully. He's surely aware that Will can see it.

"Maybe we could have the ceremony at the lake, and come here for dinner?" Will tries.

He thinks the expression that crosses Hannibal's face is a menu forming. That's a good sign. A very good sign, even if it means he needs to work hard on the kitchen. He's gonna need help. He'll have to make some calls.

Bev's brother is in construction, he might be able to recommend a few people.

He kisses Hannibal's cheek and pulls away to recover the headboard. "I'll get started on the kitchen next week, you get the decorators in, let's get this place ready for guests huh?"

It's a lot more activity than he thinks they'd planned on - but they both should have known neither of them would be happy with anything less.

"I'll schedule some more time off," Hannibal offers.

"Only as much as you can spare," Will says quickly.

"I never need an excuse to be with you, Will, but I'll happily take one."

Will smiles helplessly.

"Corny," he teases. "And we both know you just want to watch me work."

Hannibal's face stays admirably straight. "A happy coincidence, I assure you."

Will shrugs. "Mutually beneficial, then."

"We have an accord."

"Indeed we do." Will steals another kiss. "I'm gonna go shower."

"You might want to wait until after dinner," Hannibal reminds him. "And... I could join you."

"That's a deal, don't sniff me until then."

Hannibal likes smelling him, unfortunately for him. He even looks faintly perturbed. Will chuckles and takes his arm to pull him back inside.

"Come on, our wine is getting warm or something."

"It's a red," Hannibal says mildly, but let's himself be tugged.

They spend a while longer discussing paint and paper and 'accent walls' while Hannibal cooks: he slyly mentions things like ‘teams of’ painter-decorators, and that’s when Will knows that the bedroom is not the only thing that will be getting a facelift. It’s no matter, Will has downplayed his own plans for overhaul, and honestly paying someone else to do the cosmetic work outside the kitchen isn’t beneath him: he knows his strengths, and indeed Hannibal’s.

In readiness, Will has filled several pages of his pocket notebook with calculations of time and manpower and a rough project schedule, and Hannibal has of course done the same for his own plans, albeit digitally. They compare notes at the dining table, and then Hannibal feeds him pork and soufflé and more wine.

"I'm getting to like this dinner and wine every night thing," Will muses, forking in the last mouthful of buttery pork with a hum.

"I like knowing you're eating dinner every night."

"It's somewhat of a novelty, had to drop lunch." That earns him a very fierce look. "Just kidding." He knows Hannibal will bring him a lunch tray every day he's working at the house, regardless. "I think I might add another walk though."

Hannibal hums and looks up.

"Putting on timber," Will explains.

"You look wonderful," Hannibal insists.

"I don't want a bigger suit is all."

"I will join you on your walks, if you like."

Will shrugs. "Sure. I used to run, actually. Maybe we could run."

"If you like," Hannibal says agreeably. "In fact, I might prefer that too."

Will shrugs. "No gym around here."

"No. Just the woods."

"Exactly." Will sets his knife and fork down. "Dinner was beautiful, thank you."

"My pleasure, Will."

They clean up together; let the dogs out wander and play while they drink the last of their wine on the porch, still deeply entrenched in their vision for remodeling the house. The sun sinks before them, leaving trails of scarlet among the indigo clouds as the night falls proper.

Finally, when it's getting chilly and the bottle is empty, Hannibal takes their glasses, calls the dogs inside, and leads Will to the stairs.

"God, we're going to need a fancy new bathroom too, aren't we?"

"I hadn't dared to consider adding to the list quite yet."

Will sighs, considering. The suite itself isn't that old, new fixtures might just tart it up in the meantime – and the walls will certainly not be spared Hannibal's cosmetic wrath. "Maybe just a new shower for now. That's a weekend job."

"But not for tonight," Hannibal murmurs, drawing him into the bathroom.

Letting himself be neutralized, Will starts undoing Hannibal's tie with a hum. He's pretty sure Hannibal left it on just so Will could remove it later. He leans in to kiss the little window of skin that becomes visible at the base of his throat. Hannibal's pulse is there too, and the trapped scent of his cologne. Will could stay there for a while. But he doesn't think Hannibal would like that. So he moves on.

Waistcoat, and then shirt, cheeks warmed by the proximity to his warm skin. Then he goes for his own tee shirt hem, feeling Hannibal's eyes on him the whole time. It's a welcome weight.

"Come on," he whispers, unfastening Hannibal's trousers carefully.

Hannibal helps him, removing items until they're both nude. They step into the shower, and Will stretches his stiff shoulders before he rinses his hair back under the jet, stepping back to let Hannibal do the same. He could install dual showerheads, maybe, he catches himself thinking. Maybe one of those great big rainfall ones. Then he feels a tug on his curls.

"Mm?" He looks up.

"Stay with me, Will."

"Forever, if I can." He smiles up at Hannibal and feels himself tugged again, his hips this time.

"I'm very pleased to hear it. In Viking times, brides to be were given keys on chains to signify home, and family, promises and treasuring. What sort of key shall I give you?"

"What sort should I give you?" He raises his eyebrow. "Because I'm not a bride."

"No, but perhaps such a tradition is worthy of adaptation."

"What did you have in mind?"

"Perhaps we could exchange keys?"

"Symbolic keys-?"

"We already both have functional keys," Hannibal points out.

"You're not wrong." Will hears the hopeful note in his voice. "Is this in place of rings?" he asks.

That makes Hannibal hesitate. "I realize with your work, you may not be able to wear one."

Will isn't sure how to feel about that. Pleased that Hannibal thought about it, but reluctant to let go of the concept of that inescapable circle. "I could keep it on a chain."

"I'm happy to give you whatever you'd like, Will."

"Is that a double entendre?" Will grins helplessly, because he needs to think about it, and it's hard to do that with his betrothed naked and wet in front of him.

"It's a standing offer," Hannibal replies pertly.

"What a gentleman."

"Your gentleman."

"All mine," Will agrees, slinking his arms around his neck. "Care to give me a demo?"

"At your service."

"Likewise." Their mouths drift closer as they murmur. Will strokes the slick, satiny strands of Hannibal's wet hair through his fingers. "Are we going to be the Lecter-Grahams?"

"Is that what you want, Will?" Hannibal breathes.

"I think it is. Will Lecter or Hannibal Graham isn't quite us, is it? We've both looked hard for ourselves. Better to add than subtract."

He's still watching Hannibal's face; sees the way his eyes go warm and liquid. "Lecter-Graham has an agreeable sort of weight."

"It does. I'm still waiting for my demo, Doctor Lecter-Graham."

"What sort are you inclined toward, Mister Lecter-Graham?"

Will kisses him before he quite gets the last syllable out. He keeps his arms tight around him this time. He feels Hannibal's hand settle low over his wet stomach, hums softly in encouragement, and feels the warm palm slip down further to cover him and press.

He arches with a soft groan, still somehow caught off guard. Hannibal usually takes his time to get here. Will is okay with it this way too. It makes him feel so wanted. He arches approvingly, biting at Hannibal's lower lip.

Hannibal lets him grind up into his hand until he finally has to pull back and gasp a breath. "More," he grits, rasping the grain of their cheeks together.

"More of what?" Hannibal murmurs. His voice is perfectly calm, but they're pressed close and Will can feel the heat of him; the fattening of his cock against Will's thigh.

"You," Will murmurs, hips rolling.

"Just like this?" Hannibal's hand travels down his thigh now.

"You can stand on one leg if you want-?"

Hannibal gives him an even stare. "Why don't you, darling? Wrap the other around my waist."

"You know it's no fun when you ignore my attempts to be obstinate," Will tells him, but he can't keep his voice steady as Hannibal steers him back against cool tiles.

"Of course. No fun at all."

"Make it up to me," Will purrs, kissing his throat and letting Hannibal draw his thigh up against his hip. Then he rocks their hips together again. The way Hannibal is over him shelters the cradle of their hips from the water, making a slick, hot space. "Fuck," Will groans, Hannibal's cock sliding up against his. The friction is delicious. Better than nearly fucking anything Will's felt before. It always is, with Hannibal. "God I love you," Will breathes.

"Likewise," Hannibal murmurs, flexing his hips gently.

"C'mon," Will coaxes.

"You want me inside?" Hannibal murmurs.

"Is that all right?"

"Of course," Hannibal whispers, kissing under Will's jaw. Will hears him inhale softly. He has to hold him closer then; kiss Hannibal's temple and under his ear and cherish him with his hands and his breath.

Hannibal lines himself up where Will is wet and ready; sinks in with a soft, helpless noise. They both groan into skin; secure their holds. They've always moved well together. This is no different. Will is always floored by the intensity of this; how right it feels. It's genuinely never happened before. He had started to think it was a myth. Hannibal is nothing if not mythic.

The thought makes Will roll his hips and clutch him tighter still. He feels so deliciously full, but he needs even more.

"Hannibal," he breathes. He doesn't even have to say it; Hannibal's fingers find his cock and stroke.

He can't contain his little, staggered moan. Hannibal's other hand cups his head and brings their mouths back together. He keeps his hips steady, smooth, and unwinds Will like he was born to it.

He's grateful as ever. So desperately in love, even more each day. And more desperate for touch than ever before. Hannibal always, always delivers.

"Do you know how much I crave you?" he whispers to Will, gaze nearly a physical weight on him. And he still never stops moving.

"I have an idea," Will whispers.

"Good."

Will clings to him more tightly, groaning weakly. "How do you sound so calm-?"

"Because I want to hear you let go," Hannibal whispers.

"Return the favor," Will says.

"Darling," Hannibal replies, not quite a protest. His hand moves faster and his breath stutters a little.

"Yeah, that's it," Will pants, rocking his hips, "love when you're inside of me. You feel so good."

Another soft noise from Hannibal. "You do." He lets his hand still a minute to pulse his hips faster, and Will cradles him close in encouragement, panting into the humid air, soft and vocal. Lips touch the side of his neck. "Beautiful boy," Hannibal whispers.

Will whines as he sucks at the skin. "Hannibal - god -"

"You feel astounding," Hannibal murmurs.

"God, can you fucking hear how good you make me feel?"

"Yes, and I adore it," Hannibal whispers, sibilant hissing against his skin.

The air tastes of them; their need. Sharp and tangy, as intoxicating as an aged whiskey. Will could definitely consider becoming an addict to this particular blend.

Hannibal leans in, hips rocking in a stuttering lilt. Their lips smear, no rhythm, no grace, not anymore, just raw heat and a pounding pulse. Will adores it when Hannibal gets like this. He felt the exact moment when he lost control of himself. Will shelters the triumph of it delicately, as if in the warmth of his cupped hand. He tips his head back and moans again, full-throated and unashamed. His fingers creep to his cock, stroking quick. He can feel his orgasm building, and he wants Hannibal to feel it too.

A low rush of breath in answer; Hannibal's hands on his flanks desperate. He'll take them both.

"Close," Will breathes.

"Good," Hannibal murmurs, catching his lips again.

"Faster?"

Hannibal kisses him again and obeys. They're panting into one another's mouths then, movements near frantic. Will feels his entire body move with Hannibal's thrusts. He's so slick, so hard, so close. He feels than he'd ever thought possible - before Hannibal.

It's coming, rushing through him like an electric current seeking ground. He shakes, body spasming. Hannibal's teeth find his shoulder and both of them groan through clenched jaws. He can feel the throb and spill of Hannibal inside him, the way his hips lock. He's more

partial to it than he ever thought he could be. But it's just one of the many ways they have found to come together.

With a sigh, Will slumps into Hannibal, arms hanging around his neck. Hannibal kisses his forehead and Will can't hold back a lazy little laugh.

"I wish I knew how you can always fuck me stupid."

"I find it rather easy," Hannibal muses, a little huff of laughter escaping him when Will flicks his shoulder.

"You're terrible."

"If you say so."

"I know so." Will grins and kisses him, shivering as they slip apart. "It's my turn later, you know."

Hannibal's pretty bow lips curl with a smile. "Reciprocity, Will?"

"You know I'm a firm believer in it."

"Another thing we have in common."

"Mm." Will reaches past him for soap. He rinses off and kisses Hannibal when he's done, opening the shower door. "You take your time, I want to go let the dogs out one more time, okay? Buster was being a little weird before. Meet you back in bed."

Hannibal practically pouts when Will leaves him.

"I love you," Will assures him, pulling on some shorts and a robe and leaving the bathroom door ajar.

"I love you too," Hannibal calls back over the water.

Will is still smiling about it as he watches the dogs rustle about in the grass. They do their business fairly quickly, knowing it's their bedtime. And then Will gets two snifters and takes them upstairs when everyone is settled down again, comforted by the fullness the quiet house has now. Comforted by the warmth and the looseness of his own body, the body waiting for him in bed.

He bites his lip at the sight of Hannibal, appealingly bare-chested, stretched on his front with a book on the pillow before him.

"Showing me your best side?" he drawls, crawling up the mattress on his knees and leaning over Hannibal's back to set their glasses on his nightstand.

"If you prefer looking at the back of my head then perhaps so."

Will kisses his sleek crown, then squeezes the curve of his ass. "Meant this one."

A little sigh of laughter escaping him, Hannibal turns his cheek to look back at him. "I think you are confusing my best side with your best side, Will."

Will shifts, pulling the sheets up and slipping under them, finding his previous position once more. He smooths his hands up Hannibal's back slowly.

"I don't think so."

Hannibal hums, turning a page in his book then setting a bookmark delicately in the page crease. "Half an hour. That must be a record for us, Will."

"What is, baby?" Will lets his stubble scrape the nape of Hannibal's neck as he kisses his shoulders. He takes the book from Hannibal's pillow and sets it aside to join the glasses; Hannibal’s reading spectacles too.

"Between - between seductions," Hannibal whispers.

"Guess you should stop feeding me so well."

"Never," he hums when Will redistributes his weight; fits his hips against his ass and rocks.

Fuck, it feels good. He could get off again just like this, he thinks, but that wouldn't be entirely fair to Hannibal. He hears his breath hitch beneath him and it makes him smile. He rubs their cheeks together gently. Hannibal's breath is definitely audible.

"Baby," Will sighs.

"I'm here," Hannibal murmurs.

"I like you here."

"I can tell. What else do you like?"

"I like fucking you," Will whispers.

Hannibal hums. "I know you do."

"I was under the impression you like it, too."

"Very much," Hannibal assures. Will feels the fine tremor in his spine under his hand, and hums.

"Would you like it now?"

"Yes, darling," Hannibal replies.

Will touches his chest, huddled against his back, rocking his hips. "If I go get ready, will you get ready too? For me?"

"Of course."

But Will doesn't let him up right away. He's reluctant to ease back even now. He kisses the center of his spine; can't resist trailing down. Hannibal's ass is pale, soft, tempting. He's breathing slow and shallow as Will tongues the dimples at the base of his spine. Will trails down even farther; strokes his thumbs against his cheeks and noses in as Hannibal makes a soft noise.

"Okay?" Will breathes.

"Yes, completely." He gasps softly when Will licks slowly. "You wanted me to," he breathes.

"Mm?" Will licks again slowly.

"You wanted me to prepare myself for you."

"You want me to stop?" Hannibal shakes his head quickly. "Good, because I love tasting you."

Hannibal quivers a bit at the words. Will hears him murmur his name, hips elegantly shifting as Will goes back to his ministrations.

He takes it slow, enjoying him thoroughly. There isn't much he likes better. And Hannibal is clearly in such a receptive frame of mind tonight. His groan is nearly impatient, in fact, his hips lifting to press into the kisses he's being given.

"Will," he demands, albeit politely. Feeling charitable, Will circles and presses with his thumb. Hannibal nearly growls. "Good," he rumbles.

Will agrees; it is good. It would be better if Hannibal would hold still and let him play. He presses his thumb deeper and hums, listens to Hannibal's answering keen. A few strokes get him arching. Will loves the sight of his long, graceful spine. He's golden and stunning.

He traces it with his palm, then pulls back, fucks gently with his thumb again instead.

"Stunning," he murmurs, knowing it will please Hannibal. A wordless noise of agreement; more soft panting. "You're so ready to take me, aren't you?"

"At any given moment," Hannibal says, heartfelt.

"God," Will mutters. He licks again, soft and wet and deep.

Hannibal keens and pushes back into it. "Will, please, now-"

He's so hard to resist. "You touch yourself for me while I get ready," Will instructs, rising after one more lick.

Hannibal shifts avidly, hands skimming down his flanks. Will has to stay and watch for a moment. Hannibal's hands are always graceful. He's grasping beneath his body for his cock, splayed all too appealingly up on his knees, chest bowed against the mattress and the sheets in disarray around his calves.

"Good," Will mutters. He steps back off the end of the bed swiftly and goes under it for the box that houses their toys. His harness and their usual cock are on top, easily accessible, and they slide on quick. Rubbering up and then reaching for lube is the work of another moment, then he climbs back up next to Hannibal.

"Ready?"

"Yes, Will, please." He groans under his breath as Will teases the head of the toy against his rim. It's so familiar, but Will has to hesitate each time, to savor. Then, slowly, he starts to push home.

He makes it as smooth as possible. Beneath him, Hannibal goes quiet and breathless. Will watches the muscles of his shoulders ripple as he braces himself. Then he lets out a low moan as Will bottoms out.

"How's that, baby? Feel like you wanted?"

"Yes, Will," Hannibal praises, "it's a sapid feeling, quiet and right."

"I can't be poetic like you," Will grumbles.

"Just move for me-"

"That I can do." Will flexes his hips. He gives him a few long strokes and listens to his satisfied breaths. But he wants to hear him lose it, too. He sounds so calm right now, like he's basking.

Will knows he trusts him with anything. That kind of trust had always seemed nearly mythical, like Hannibal in his entirety. Will leans down to press kisses to his shoulders and bridges his hips steadily; faster when Hannibal moans for it. His hands settle on warm flanks and hold him steady. It feels easy and right like this. His own breath catches as he listens to Hannibal moan.

He levers himself up and looks down at where he's disappearing into Hannibal, shifts his hands to spread him and caress. Another little moan then; Will strokes with his thumbs and praises him softly.

"So beautiful like this, you feel good?"

"Divine," Hannibal groans.

"You got that right." Will rocks faster, licking his lips. His own breath catches. It's so fucking hot, he can never get enough. The base of the toy presses against his cock, providing a teasing friction, but just seeing and hearing the way it affects Hannibal is enough. He feels warm all the way through. "Fuck," he grits, gripping Hannibal's hips tighter.

He lifts him enough to get a hand under him and handle his leaking cock. To change the angle; make him gasp again. Now he's certain he's got him where he wants him. There's a certain tension he looks for in Hannibal's movements that he sees clearly now. A certain timbre to his voice.

"Come on baby," he purrs, "show me what you want."

Hannibal shifts on his knees, chest dipping closer to the mattress as his back arches.

"Fuck, that's it," Will breathes. He puts a bit more force into his strokes. Faster, a little sharper. He catches his bottom lip between his teeth when Hannibal moans his name. "God," he murmurs.

Hannibal arches even more, if possible. The sounds of their coupling are wet and loud in the quiet room. "Will-" He sounds stretched thin, grateful for it.

"Come on, baby, I can tell you need to."

A wordless hissing sound in response; Will croons his name again. He can feel Hannibal's cock slicking up as he gets close and Will strokes him as firmly as he can. He's impressed by how fast this was; how hard Hannibal is: for all Will mentally deifies him, Hannibal is only human. Only human, and as deeply in love as Will himself is.

It's heady to have, that sort of thing. More precious than gold.

Will bends to kiss his shoulders, free hand knuckling into the sheets for purchase. He grinds in with his hips as he does it, feels Hannibal tense on a groan beneath him, feels him spill in a rush. Will keeps stroking him fast until he stops; until the cries become satisfied. Then he stills his hips.

Beneath him, Hannibal pants hard and ragged, then reaches blindly for his hand. Will lets him lace their fingers. He pulls until they separate; unclips and throws the harness to the edge of the bed before huddling close into Hannibal.

Hannibal hauls him entirely into the circle of his arms. They're both still breathing hard, entirely sated. Will's limbs feel loose, his skin heated. Their lips smudge together in the near dark, and Will sees a galaxy behind his eyelids. They are infinite.

Hannibal's breath feathers over his lips, and he slowly starts to slide down Will's body. He kisses his chest; the pale skin of his scars. Will strokes through his hair and sighs. Hannibal doesn't linger, his breath still panting out against Will's damp skin. He sinks down between his thighs with a soft hum.

He pushes them wide, and Will lets them fall ungracefully open. He likes the way Hannibal's smile turns delighted as he dips down to taste him, a sommelier sampling some luxury vintage. Will knows he's already plenty slick. He hears Hannibal's soft gasp of pleasure though, like he's the one being tasted. Trust him to savor this. Always.

At the thought, Will folds an arm back under his head and sighs in content. He's still floating on a deep velvet pile of sensation. Hannibal's mouth, soft and silky; his hands on Will's thighs. He hums again, murmurs Hannibal's name. He feels Hannibal’s lips slide up to his cock, taking him in to suck. He takes his time about it, his fingers sliding up Will's thighs.

"God," Will sighs, stroking his temples gently with his thumbs. Hannibal's fingers slip inside him, just as slow. It stutters a little moan out of Will. Hannibal seems to want to touch him, every part he can reach. Will is still so sensitive from before, every instance of contact sparking toe-curling sensation. Hannibal doesn't give him time for his pulse to slow. He starts to stroke in quickly with his fingers. Will groans again, more full-chested this time.

"Oh fuck..."

He's starting to feel a deep tingling inside. Hannibal seems to have a specific aim with these touches, stroking continually in one specific spot. Will touches his hair in turn, falling gently across his brow.

"Hannibal, that's-" He has to take a steadying breath. "It's so good - I can't-"

A hum around his cock. He presses again. Will gasps.

"Hannibal--" he bridges into it, breaths coming fast. Something is twisting sharply inside him. It feels overwhelming, oversensitive, especially after having Hannibal inside him just before. Will hisses through his teeth helplessly, hips kicking up.

Hannibal seems intent on pursuing a specific outcome. All Will can do is plant his heels in the sheets and let him. He's somewhat embarrassed by the noises he's making; Hannibal's mouth on him is slower than usual, teasing rather than driving, but his fingers are anything but.

Will gasps, curling up into the pressure on his insides. "Hannibal. Hannibal - oh-"

It's too much. He squeezes his eyes shut and grasps at his hair as he feels something inside him release; clench down and push.

A sudden flood startles him in the haze of the orgasm. He feels it rush out of him and he whines, fingers jerking. But Hannibal only moans softly around his mouthful, not letting up until Will hisses.

Then he pushes himself up on his elbows. His eyes are dark with satisfaction, his bare, lean body all flushed with it. His face and neck are gleaming. Will starts to stutter when he realizes what's happened. Hannibal just smiles, a pleased slash of burgundy.

"It's all right, that was the desired outcome," he assures Will, one warm hand coming to settle on the scar that sits low on Will's belly, faded white with age.

"I didn't -"

"Didn't what?"

"Expect that - I've never-"

"Good." Hannibal visibly preens. "I like to give you things you've never had before."

"So smug," Will murmurs, touching his cheekbone with light fingers.

"Justifiably, I assure you."

Will swipes a finger across his bottom lip, but it's already dry. *Licked clean*, his brain supplies. Still, Hannibal agreeably leans up to kiss him; let him taste.

Will moans again softly, into his mouth. He feels shivery and ignited still, thighs trembling when he wraps them around Hannibal's waist. Hannibal's weight coming down on him helps to settle him a bit.

They kiss for a few aching minutes, Will still acutely aware of the wetness on the sheets beneath them. But he allows Hannibal's hands to soothe over his skin. Finally, Hannibal kisses him once more, and they separate to clean up. Will shuffles into the bathroom, and when he emerges Hannibal is changing the sheets.

"Lemme go get you a cloth," Will slurs eventually, when contentment threatens to slide into sleep. Hannibal just nods, slipping into bed.

As he wets a washcloth, Will reflects, fondly and with no small amount of wonder, what a privilege it is to see Hannibal like this. When they'd met it was obvious he was being more open with Will than mostly anyone else, and though Will isn't sure what about him spoke to deserve such a gift, he's glad it did. Even this is rare, he knows. Hannibal doesn't allow caretaking often.

Will makes sure not to waste the opportunity when he goes back through. His strokes over Hannibal's skin are slow and savoring. Then he crawls into bed with him when everything else is taken care of, curling back into the warm bank of his body. Hannibal makes room as always.

"Beautiful boy," he murmurs to Will.

"Your boy," Will tells him.

"My boy," Hannibal agrees. His arms tighten slightly. They pull the covers up and Hannibal reaches to turn off the light, then they settle together again.

“I’m gonna go see Peter tomorrow,” Will muses aloud.

“Is this the Peter who’s responsible for the designs?”

“Yeah, Peter Bernadone. I’ve made him a rabbit hutch, I want to go get it set up for him before I start the kitchen.” He pushes his face into Hannibal’s shoulder, humming when Hannibal pets down his side.

“You’ve missed him,” Hannibal surmises: he’s clearly noticed that Will likes to make things for people he cares about.

“I think I have,” Will agrees. The thought makes him smile: it’ll be good to see him.

Chapter 2

Will sips the last of his coffee before shutting off his truck engine in the driveway of Peter's house. He hops out and drags the dismantled hutch he's built for Peter off the back of the bed, propping it on the porch before he knocks on the door.

Peter appears after a moment, a bashful smile on his face. He's recently taken up in a converted barn, with the field behind and a small yard occupied constantly with animals in various stages of rehabilitated.

"Oh," he says, delighted. "Will."

"Hello, Peter." Will smiles immediately. "I brought your new rabbit hutch."

Carefully, Peter peers out at where Will gestures, hands trembling faintly on the jamb of the door. "Will, it's huge," he exclaims cheerfully.

"Want me to help you set it up?"

"If you don't mind."

"Of course. How have you been, Peter?"

"I'm okay. Do you want to want to come in for - for a drink?"

"Iced tea?" Will asks. "We can take it outside with us."

"I'll get you some," Peter nods.

"I'll come in and help."

With a nod, Peter shuffles back from the door to let Will inside. Immediately, he's greeted by a small cloud of animals. He crouches down to greet them. Dogs, at least four, and several cats at varying levels of friendliness. A bird squawks from a perch over his head. There's hutches of various sizes containing smaller animals, and book cases holding reptile tanks, complete with heating lamps.

"How many new ones, Peter?" Will asks.

"Just a few," Peter says dubiously. When Will raises a joking brow, he admits, "Four."

"The beagles are new," Will observes, scratching one under the chin who wags a bald tail.

"They were - from a lab."

"Oh," Will murmurs. "Are they okay?"

"They're fine now," Peter smiles.

Will strokes the other's ears. "Good."

"They - they'll need permanent homes, some of them, you know."

"You can call me to help out with the dogs, like usual. My friends at the rescue can come out."

"I was thinking maybe you could ask around," Peter says quietly, "I don't want them to go to shelters."

"I know. Don't worry, we both know the right people."

Will pushes himself back to his feet. He debates whether Hannibal would consider an emotionally damaged and slightly mangy beagle a welcome addition to the family. He suspects that might be a bridge too far. Though, he reasons to himself, Hannibal rarely denies him anything. If ever.

He straightens up and smiles at Peter. "Let's take some tea outside and go see the rest of the animals."

He watches Peter pour the drinks and then takes them outside for him, the dogs and a couple of cats following.

"I'm starting to renovate my place this week," he tells Peter as they walk to the pasture fence.

"The designs I drew up looked - suitable?"

"They did, thanks for that. I called your stone supplier too."

"And you're hiring help with this one, you said?"

"Because of the time frame, yeah. And my shoulder."

"Who - who are you hiring?"

"A few guys I've used before - remember Bruce and his crew? He's actually a friend of mine's cousin."

"Y-yes, okay. Do you need my help? I can help."

"You're welcome to come a couple of days and direct, I know we might need your expertise for the foundations of the extension."

Peter nods seriously. "Call me when you need me and I'll be ready."

"Thanks, Peter."

Will knows he finds it difficult, to not be able to do everything he used to do before his head injury. The fact he'd even offer is nice. And Will likes spending time with him. Peter is calm

and easy and kind. He doesn't expect more of Will than he's prepared for. And in turn, Will doesn't expect too much from him.

Heading to fetch the hutch components, Will considers that as he carts them to the yard. "I had a question to ask you."

"G-go ahead," Peter murmurs.

"I'm getting married. Remember I told you about the guy?"

Peter nods. "I remember."

"I wondered if you wanted to come to the wedding," Will shrugs, "but there's no pressure - I know crowds aren't your thing."

Peter looks thoughtful for a moment. "Crowds aren't your thing, either."

"We only have a half-dozen guests invited, honestly. Including you."

Peter sips his tea slowly, the tremor in his hand stifled with some effort. Then, he hums. "Can I... think about it, Will?"

"Of course. I won't be upset if you don't want to come. I understand."

"It's not that I don't want to."

"Just let me know, Peter."

"Of course. Thank you."

Will smiles at him, meeting his eyes for a moment. He thinks Peter looks genuinely pleased to be asked. But then they start to put together the sides of the hutch, and the moment passes, and Will thinks that it's all right either way. He's just happy Peter likes the new enclosure for the rabbits - a sheltered section for bedding and shade, and a wired section for grazing safely.

They get it set up quickly, and Peter goes to transfer the rabbits over to explore. He watches them, holding onto the fence and smiling. The pink-tailed beagle comes to lean happily against Will's leg, little white paws on top of his worn work boot and his tail wagging.

Will strokes his flank gently and looks around the yard. Peter's place is nice; not as much to Will's taste as his own, but nothing would be. Not that his is going to look much to his taste soon, he muses. He's seen Hannibal's decor samples arriving. It's hard to imagine Hannibal's taste applied to his farmhouse. He's seen some rather nice stained wood paneling though. He'll have to wait and see. He has no doubt it will straddle modernity and tradition as effortlessly as Hannibal does.

Will can't help loving everything Hannibal has a hand in. He simply loves him. And Hannibal returns it in kind. Will looks down at the beagle and sighs: he knows his own weaknesses.

He helps Peter clean up, and carry the glasses inside.

"Thank you for the, the hutch, Will."

"Any time, you know I'll come over and help."

Peter smiles. "Me too." He walks Will back to his truck, tugging at his cardigan sleeves. "It was nice to see you, Will."

"It was nice to see you too, Peter. Thanks again for the designs."

"It's no problem, you paid for them."

"I know, but I know you don't do many projects anymore and I was very pleased that you agreed."

"My pleasure." He smiles at the floor.

Will smiles at the top of his head, stooping to scratch the beagle with the bald tail once again, smiling when he leans up to give Will a beseeching lick.

"Peter," he says gently. "This one really likes me."

"He does," Peter says. "He's called - he's called Fred."

"I don't know if I can leave here without him," Will murmurs. *Fred*.

"That's okay with me. I want them to have good homes." He smiles, mouth working gently. "I know you can handle his - rehab."

"Are you sure? I can ask my vet to call yours, I'll take him and get him sorted as soon as I can book an appointment - mine need their boosters anyway." He doesn't really pause to think about Hannibal until he's said it, feeling momentarily guilty. But Fred is happily leaning against his knee, and Will is fairly certain that Hannibal has probably been expecting this at some point.

"I'll help you load him into the truck," Peter murmurs.

"You're sure?"

"Very sure. I know you'll - you'll be good to him. He looks like he's made up his mind."

"He does, doesn't he?" Will likes the sound of that.

He addresses Fred now. "You wanna come home with me, buddy? You'll have lots of siblings, and your other dad will pretend he doesn't like you but he'll feed you sausage when I'm not looking."

Fred tilts his head, one ear flipped back. His pink tail is wagging hesitantly, demeanor shy, timid, but *brave*.

"Good boy," Will tells him, opening his truck door and taking the bag of toys Peter hands him.

"I feed mine homemade stuff, will he be okay with it?"

"I've put in the brand of kibble I get if you want to transition him, but he'll be okay," Peter nods a bit. He watches with a fond head tilt as Will bends to lift Fred into the truck, making sure he's settled before crossing to his own door.

"Thanks for everything, Peter. I'll keep you posted on Fred," Will promises, hopping up into his truck seat. "And I'll see about getting the others rehomed too."

Peter just dips his chin and nods. He waves to Will as he turns around and drives back down the lane. He can't wait to get home and make some introductions.

He feels only slightly apprehensive about it as he pulls up at home in Wolf Trap, the sky overhead white with banked cloud but the air bright and crisp. Happily, Fred seems to enjoy car rides, and has spent much of the journey with his paws up on the window, watching the world slide by. He's wagging in the passenger seat now, sweetly timid. Will scratches his hind quarters, chuckling when the dog wiggles into the touch.

As predicted, Hannibal opens the front door at the sound of the engine, and only pauses when he sees Will lift the beagle out of the door.

Will squints. Is he smiling?

"Hey," he greets him, sheepishly.

"Welcome home, Will. I see you've brought a friend."

"I did. This is Fred." Will brings him to Hannibal. "Peter uh - fosters animals. This guy was rescued from an animal testing facility. He asked me to... find homes for a couple."

"And you found our home for Fred," Hannibal guesses.

"I... did." Will waits for his assessment, looking at him from under his lashes.

Hannibal reaches out to offer a flat hand to Fred, who sniffs, his pink tail nervously flickering.

"Poor thing," Hannibal murmurs, "he's being very forthcoming, consideing."

"He's had a hard go of it," Will agrees.

"He looks like he has." Hannibal takes in the sparse condition of his coat; the nicks in his ears. "I'll call the vet for a check-up in the morning."

"I can take care of it," Will protests.

"It's all right, I know you're up early." He smiles at Will, the quiet one with his eyes.

"You don't seem upset," Will observes, smiling when Fred starts to clean under his chin.

"I couldn't be. Not at you, not for this."

"No? I considered I might be uh - out of line."

"I'll let you know when I feel we might be at our maximum dog capacity," Hannibal says solemnly.

"You're sure?" Will feels himself uncommonly shy, trying to fight through it. Hannibal's indulgence should be familiar by now, but it still feels monstrously undeserved.

"You don't ask for much, Will."

"No, I suppose not."

Hannibal strokes Fred behind the ears. "Fred here isn't even scratching the surface of what I would give."

"Hannibal..." the words wrangle a smile out of Will, and he leans in for a kiss, the beagle cradled between them. When Hannibal strokes into his curls, Will is abruptly sure he's done the right thing. "Thank you."

"Why don't we take him inside to meet the others?" Hannibal suggests, nuzzling his temple.

"Sounds good."

He lets Hannibal give Fred one final pat, then go to open the front door for Will and his armful of dog. Beaming at him, Will carries Fred inside.

*

Will is busier than ever over the next few weeks, the house rapidly turning into a building site, the kitchen white goods hauled out in a matter of hours and the fronts of the cabinets all thrown into a skip out front, shortly joined by the old tiles and fixtures. The new kitchen skeleton is in within the week, the back of the house knocked out and the extension frame up the week after.

The whole process is made quicker and easier by Will hiring help – with Hannibal's house in the process of selling, money isn't a problem, and Bev's cousins are already in construction and happy to chip in when they can. Peter even swings by, though only once or twice.

Will and Hannibal become temporarily and reluctantly accustomed to living out of the freezer, thankfully well-stocked, and using a counter-top oven Will acquired in the past for the boat. He thinks Hannibal hates it, but he never complains.

Despite the noise of the renovations, Hannibal makes a distinct effort to keep his office hours to a minimum in an effort to reduce his commuting back and forth to Baltimore, which both of them acknowledge isn't ideal. He's begun contacting colleagues who might be willing to

take referrals. Or Skype, which Will thinks is hilarious, but Hannibal has found a few patients who actually prefer it.

"You can wear your pajamas out of frame," Will had joked, to make his mouth pinch up at the corners. He's secretly hoping that Hannibal does. That, or nothing at all.

He wouldn't, but he clearly likes knowing Will's thinking about it. Will likes thinking about it. He likes that they can be easy with each other; they so seldom have been with anyone else, it seems.

It makes him think about the wedding again, about their few selected guests. He fidgets at the thought. He still doesn't really want it, but he wants Hannibal to have it.

"Do you think I should ask my dad to come?" he asks Hannibal that night, over dinner.

"Would you like him to be there? Will it cause you stress?"

Will thinks about it. "I don't think he'd come. I can't decide if it will hurt more him ignoring me or me ignoring him."

"You only have control over one of those two things," Hannibal murmurs.

"I know."

"Why don't you speak?"

Will laughs somewhat humorlessly. "He still expects me to be someone else."

"Not -"

"No, not that. A mechanic. A dockhand. Something more like him." He shrugs. "Though the other stuff didn't help."

"You're a carpenter." Hannibal seems confused.

"I wasn't the last time we talked."

"He didn't approve of you being in the police?"

"He didn't approve of me trying to join the FBI."

Hannibal raises his eyebrows again.

"They didn't want me either," Will says quickly, more acidly than he'd like after so long. "Well, not officially."

Hannibal's eyebrows stay up.

"It's not a fun talk," Will says dryly.

"We don't have to have it at all, if you'd rather not."

"Okay." Will sips his beer. He's not sure. It all feels so far away, most days. But Hannibal still looks expectant as he cuts his own dinner into neat pieces. Will sighs and takes a sip of his wine. "I consulted a couple times on open cases for the BSU while I was a detective."

"Did you?"

"I did."

"How'd that come about?"

"Someone got wind of my uh, 'unique mind'," Will drawls.

"Of course. And your father?"

"He thought it was unclean work, he's suspicious, y'know. Thinks the dead are holy, and shouldn't be..." he gestures. "Kept from their rest. And he was afraid of who I was becoming, how it affected me." He sighs. "I was too, of course. That's the hell of it all. But at the time, it was enough. We haven't spoken in years."

"Perhaps it's time," Hannibal reasons.

Will just nods and goes back to his dinner, grateful when Hannibal doesn't press. It makes Will emotional, to think how Hannibal just knows him now. How there's one person, how that's all he's ever needed.

"I don't know if I want our day to be about him," he realizes aloud.

"You can send him an announcement," Hannibal murmurs. "Perhaps an invitation to visit sometime."

"Yeah. That sounds better." Will reaches for his hand. Hannibal squeezes it and keeps eating with his other.

"This kitchen renovation has gone quicker than mine did," Hannibal muses, "it's nearly entirely usable already."

"Reusing the cabinet bases in the original half," Will mumbles. "And not moving the sink." He shrugs. "And three other men helping me this time."

He knows that's the part that really makes the difference, though he's reluctant to admit it. He hasn't even had any shoulder flare-ups recently. And things really are coming together - the timber base of the extension is already in too. Will loves to walk around the house and look at it. He's excited for the roof to go in - it will really light everything up. He can't wait until Hannibal sees the glass he’s ordered.

The decor is coming together, too, one room at a time. That was just a question of paint and flooring, and all the touches of comfort Hannibal loves. Will has tried not to pay attention to the amount of deliveries they've received recently. He just asked the workmen to carry the headboard he'd made out of the barn and into another upstairs room: he knows the bedroom is next on the agenda.

They've been sleeping on the camper in the living room for the time being – also freshly painted and papered, with a very modern wall of reclaimed wood paneling that simply poofed into existence one day whilst Will was in Baltimore getting supplies. Will is used to the set up, and he knows Hannibal is not, but they're just… happy to be together. It's the only thing that works for them. It's a constant thing for Will, knowing how much Hannibal has given up to be here with him. The least Will can do is make sure he's never cold. And he does.

***

Hannibal thinks longingly of Will's house every time he walks into his Baltimore office these days. It's still perfectly appointed and tastefully filled with his books and curiosities... and it doesn't feel like him anymore. He's surprised how much he's reoriented himself in the last few months; things that Will wouldn't like don't appeal like they used to, even in this setting. Best that he starts fresh.

He makes his way through reception, greeting his secretary and noticing a man waiting immediately, clean cut and imposing - not Hannibal's first appointment.

"I'm not accepting new clients at this time," he says coolly. "As I'm sure Miss Collins would have told you."

The stranger rises, large and commanding in the small space, immaculately tailored, with a weathered, masculine handsomeness and a measuring gaze.

"As much as I'm sure my wife would love it, I'm not here for a session, Doctor." He opens his wallet, showing a badge and ID: he's from the Bureau.

"Agent Crawford," Hannibal says politely, after scanning it thoroughly. "What can I do for you?"

"Just an inquiry. Perhaps we could use your office."

Hannibal represses a sigh. He's curious, that he will admit, but still hesitant.

"Follow me." He leads Crawford through to the office. "Would you like a coffee?"

"Kind of you, but only if you were planning to join me."

Hannibal checks his watch, then nods to his secretary through the ajar door.

"A pot of coffee if you please, Heather. Come, Agent Crawford." He leads the agent into his inner office, gestures to the chairs by his desk. "Please, take a seat."

He returns to the door to accept the tray of coffee from Heather a few moments later, and then carries it back to the desk. "So, to what to I owe the pleasure?"

He allows a pause while Agent Crawford pours his coffee - no sugar, splash of cream, the cup seeming small in his big brown hands, sporting gun calluses and the scent of some fine shaving balm. "I came to you because I've heard you specialize in abnormal psychology."

"That is correct," Hannibal replies, pleased despite himself.

"You were also an emergency room surgeon, and the youngest person to ever enter medical school, and your published pieces in various psychology journals have been on my radar for a while. I head the Behavioral Sciences Unit."

"I see," Hannibal murmurs. He's starting to understand. "You've certainly done your homework, Agent Crawford."

"That's sort of what I do. It's what I have to do, to keep people safe. You keep people safe too."

He's good at this, Hannibal reflects. "Where I can." He re-crosses his legs. "So why are you here?"

"I'd like your insight. I think it could be invaluable in my work. Sometimes psychological profiles can give us a more complete idea of who we're looking for than even forensic evidence."

"I see. You want me to offer profiles on murder scenes."

"I suppose I do."

"Hm." Hannibal considers that at length; thinks of Will, and his only recently recovered mental equilibrium. He acknowledges simultaneously the ways he has truly changed Hannibal: never before would he have considered anyone else's needs before his own whims. Finally, he decides. "Unfortunately, you've caught me in the process of both relocating and downsizing my practice."

"Oh?"

"Yes, I'm getting married soon." He smiles politely. "But I encourage you to leave your card, Agent Crawford."

"Leave my card. I have to admit, I was hoping for a more immediate answer."

"Perhaps the timing will be better later," Hannibal replies.

"Perhaps it will. So it's not a no?"

"Not a no, but not a yes."

Visibly disgruntled, Jack takes another sip of his coffee. He's stalling, looking for something to reel Hannibal in. "You're getting married, you said? I must offer my congratulations."

"Thank you, I'm very much looking forward to it."

"When's the wedding?"

"Just a few more weeks now." Hannibal can't help sounding smug.

"Very nice."

Crawford pushes himself to his feet, graceful despite his size. It's the bulk of an aging athlete, Hannibal muses, knowing he'll have the tenacity to match.

"Family is important to me, Doctor Lecter," he tells him, wandering around, touching at things with the curiosity of a man who reads people for a living. Hannibal knows instinctively that he's used to getting what he wants, and that he has a great many skills at his disposal in the pursuit of doing so. Chiefly, it seems, his shrewd intellect, and the insight it affords him. He stops now at the only photo on Hannibal's desk and picks it up - Hannibal and Will, just a few weeks ago. It was an engagement gift from Alana.

"I'm sure you understand that," he rumbles, looking closely at the photo.

"I do," Hannibal replies. He sees the haze of the manipulation like clouds on the horizon.

"I'm trying to protect families, Doctor Lecter. I'd like you to help me. I implore you to really think about my offer, while you're moving your practice. Give it some serious consideration." He replaces the frame carefully. "Where is it you're moving to?"

"Virginia," Hannibal obliges, "my fiancé has a converted farmhouse."

"Closer to Quantico," Crawford observes mildly.

"But crime doesn't only happen at Quantico, does it, Agent Crawford?"

Another moment of silence - a contretemps they both acknowledge.

"Unfortunately not. Wish that were the case." With a dry chuckle, Crawford reaches into his pocket again for a business card. "My information, as you asked."

"Thank you." Hannibal tucks it into the Rolodex on his desk, shortly to be transported to the home office. He rises to walk Crawford out. "It was a pleasure to meet you, Agent Crawford. I'll bear your offer in mind."

"Thank you, Doctor Lecter. I appreciate it."

He looks at the photo of Will again, seeming struck. Hannibal tilts his head.

"What's his name? Your fiancé."

"Will," Hannibal supplies, reluctantly.

"My wife and I have been married for thirty years," Crawford says. "Best wishes to you."

"Much appreciated. Have a pleasant day, Agent Crawford." He shakes his hand and watches thoughtfully as the big man strides out of his office.

When the door closes, Hannibal picks up the picture and examines it a moment. Will, mouth crooked in a sardonic smile, looks alight with that wry mirth he specializes in. In the picture,

Hannibal looks down at him with palpable adoration, much like he does now. They had been bickering, Hannibal recalls, when it was taken - though good-naturedly. It almost always is.

Smiling at the thought, Hannibal turns his reflections back to Jack Crawford. It had almost seemed for a moment like he recognized Will. He supposes it's possible, though the idea disquiets him. An unexpected tendril or yearning creeps up from the mist of his musing, though: temptation. Their love is so complete; but much like his own, Hannibal has always been taunted by the unturned corners of Will's past. In turn, the siren song of his own abandoned appetites choruses alongside. It's a whisper, but not so easily ignored.

Hannibal sucks his teeth, eyes trained on Will's smile. This is not part of the life they're building. He knows that. It wouldn't do Will any good, either. He sighs and replaces the picture frame. He has work to do. With his mind whirring, he buzzes through to Heather and asks her to come and collect the coffee pot. He needs to concentrate. He needs *time* to think.

Chapter 3

Jack Crawford's visit hangs over Hannibal like the lingering scent of smoke as he goes about his day, and by the time he's ushered the last client out of the door, the picture of Will on the desk is looking at him in an almost accusatory fashion.

Hannibal sits now, examining Will at length and trying to parse the way Jack had *looked* at him. The way he'd used him to bait Hannibal into accepting the job offer.

Debating for a moment, Hannibal twitches at the carefully laid out array of stationery around him, fountain pen, blotter, pencil, scalpel – and then he sighs and picks up the phone.

"Good evening, Doctor Lecter," says a smooth voice, after only a couple of rings.

"Good evening, Doctor DuMaurier. I apologize for the unscheduled call."

"I am merely working on my files, Doctor. It's no trouble."

"Thank you. I have found myself in the rare position of feeling conflicted."

"Indeed rare. You would like to discuss the situation?"

"If you have time to spare. I can make an appointment, but I know our schedules have been incompatible recently."

"I have some time." She sounds curious to know what might prompt him to seek advice.

"Thank you. It's to do with a visitor I had today, actually."

"At your office?"

"Yes, an unexpected one - an agent from the FBI."

"That is unexpected."

"He was interested in my services as a psychological profiler."

"In what capacity?"

"The apprehension of violent criminals. Behavioral Science. My abnormal psychology papers have caught attention, it seems."

"Were you pleased by that?"

"I was pleased," Hannibal murmurs, "and intrigued."

"But you mentioned a conflict?" Bedelia prompts gently.

Hannibal thinks his way around it for a moment, before he admits, "I believe the agent knew Will. By some stroke of coincidence, the same man who sought out his help now seeks out mine. I suspect Will would be... wary."

"Wary?" she repeats.

"He guards his privacy and his mind viciously. I understand he left the police force for mental health reasons extraneous to other factors."

"Still, this wouldn't necessarily preclude your involvement, especially as you are already a mental health professional."

"No, of course." Hannibal looks down at his ledger. "But... Will knows me."

Bedelia should, as well, though she might soft-pedal her knowledge. "Knows you completely," she intuits, "about what happened to you?"

"Yes," Hannibal murmurs.

Bedelia is a lot like Will. She incises the true meaning behind his words effortlessly. "You would like to hide it from him under the illusion of his disapproval while you consider if your own past will affect your ability to work in this field."

Hannibal hums. "You disapprove."

"I disapprove of stories you tell yourself to procrastinate on acknowledging truths you already know."

It is uncomfortable to hear. "You think I am not capable of working in the apprehension of violent crime."

"Not incapable," she corrects. "But there would be... trade-offs." At his irritated silence, she continues. "You know as well as I do, Hannibal, that your preference for costume was born of necessity. You have made yourself comfortable in your sheep's clothing, but hearing the call of other wolves may... incite you to call back."

Hannibal curls his lip, faintly. "You think I can't control myself? That the scent of blood would drive me to frenzy?"

"It doesn't matter what I think, Hannibal." He hears the soft, mercurial sound of liquid hitting glass. "It's what we both know that concerns me. You are completely capable of harnessing your instincts, you have done so effortlessly for many years now. But from what you've told me about your feelings for your fiancé... Do you really wish to put yourself in a position where you must choose?" He sighs, and she adds, like an afterthought, "It sounds like it's not the only choice you're struggling to make."

Hannibal nudges his pen into a straight line against his planner. "I know I can control myself."

"Unless you decide not to."

He sighs. "I won't."

"Then what is it that you're avoiding?"

"Another truth."

"You think his tolerance will run out?"

"I don't want to think it will."

"You won't know unless you allow for that eventuality." She hums, and he can hear the chime of crystal hitting granite. "I know how meticulously you plan, Hannibal. Don't avoid it for too long."

"I'll endeavor not to." He picks the pen up, sets it down again. "Thank you for your time, Doctor."

"You're welcome. It's nice to touch base, I know you've struggled to fit a session into your schedule lately."

"It's been challenging. Perhaps I'll call your office to schedule something in a few weeks, before the wedding."

"Of course, whatever you need."

She rings off politely and Hannibal sets his phone down on his desk, next to his planner. A sigh escapes him in a silent stream: Bedelia's therapy reminds him of antiseptic on an open wound, necessary but painful.

He forces himself back to work for a while, writing up a few of his notes in more detail and reviewing some source material for a few patients' interest. He's interrupted by the drill of the phone. He checks the display to see his uncle's country code. A centering breath, and he picks it up.

"Allo," he murmurs.

"Good afternoon, Hannibal."

"Uncle Robert." It is him; he wasn't sure if it would be. He's not fond of small talk, never was.

"We were pleased to receive your invitation, though I must say it is rather short notice."

"Yes," Hannibal acknowledges. "It was not originally to be a ceremony at all."

"I see. Congratulations are in order, all the same."

"Thank you, Uncle. We're both ecstatic."

"Your aunt and I are delighted to hear it."

"How is she?" Hannibal asks.

"In better health and spirits than I am, as always."

Hannibal smiles. Typical. The Lecters are prone to brood, every last one of them. "I'm not surprised to hear that."

"No, I imagine not. She is out for her weekly hair appointment," he adds. "She will be cross that I haven't waited to call you."

"Perhaps I could call back tomorrow evening, at home."

"You may," Robert allows. "But I wanted to tell you that we will come."

"You have no idea how happy I am to hear it, Uncle. Thank you."

"We are as well. Your sister has agreed to travel here in order to fly with us."

"I will look forward to collecting all three of you. I'll book your flights, and a hotel for your stay."

"It's not necessary," Robert protests.

"I insist, you're my family."

"Yes," Robert murmurs. "And you are ours."

Hannibal smiles faintly. "And soon, you'll meet my latest additions."

"Surely there's just the one?" Robert asks dryly. "Will, wasn't it?"

"He has dogs," Hannibal says, smiling.

"Oh, goodness. How many?" He can hear Robert's smile too.

"Seven, at the last count."

"That does qualify as a plural," his uncle agrees.

"We are a pack, it seems."

"Well. We look forward to seeing all of you," Robert murmurs.

"And us you, Uncle."

They say goodbye and Hannibal places the phone back on his desk.

Now, he thinks, to go home to his pack. The accent wall should have been installed by now, the décor in the bedroom started a couple of days previously. That delights him nearly as much as the thought of an impending visit from his family. They can finally start sleeping in their room again. It will be perfect.

The thought buoys him on his long drive home through peak time traffic. The golden glow from their windows greets him from across the field when he arrives. And Will, on the porch, still working. The back half of the house is still mostly bare brick and plaster board, but Hannibal can see even in the gathering dark that it's getting there. He can also see that the skylights in the spare-room-turned-study are done.

The kitchen still isn't quite finished, but the majority of the white goods are in place, and Will is now only awaiting an order on the tile backsplashes and lighting. It's perfectly adequate to cook in though, and Hannibal intends to do so.

Will has pushed this to the wire. He works so hard. But Hannibal likes all the assistants he's found, so that strikes him as positive. He comes to him on the porch where he's sawing, the dogs all sprawled to watch.

"Hello, darling," he murmurs.

Will looks up, curls catching the gold porch light.

"Hi," he beams. Actually beams.

Hannibal smiles back, helplessly. The sheer joy of knowing how rare that expression is goes to Hannibal's head somewhat. He decides then and there that, until he's made up his mind, he cannot tell Will about Jack Crawford. The thought of disrupting their new, easy peace is unthinkable.

He presses in to kiss him and then laughs when he feels small feet on his trouser leg. Buster, jumping up again. Fred is close behind, hopefully tilting his head.

"Time for dinner, I think," he says, reaching down to scratch behind their ears.

"I'll just clean up here and come in to help," Will promises.

"Take your time," Hannibal gentles. Hopefully not too much of it. He'd enjoy a sous-chef.

But Will joins him soon enough, smelling of sawdust and work. He washes his hands carefully, feeds the dogs, then repeats the process. Hannibal watches him all the while. He's moving easily, which is pleasing to see. And he seems content.

Hannibal sets out an array of vegetables to be diced.

"My uncle called," he broaches, handing Will a paring knife: one truth, to allay his feeling of unease.

"That's good," Will starts to peel deftly.

Hannibal has left the fine dicing for himself, and he does it quickly and moves on to herbs before he continues. "They're coming," he adds.

"That's good too." Will smiles.

"He's looking forward to meeting you. And the dogs," Hannibal admits with a laugh. "He's quite fond, though he won't admit it."

"Of me?" Will raises his eyebrows, coy.

"I am quite fond of you," Hannibal counters.

"As fond as your uncle?"

"I am also quite fond of my uncle." Hannibal refuses to be baited.

"Sounds like things might get a bit awkward," Will snorts.

Hannibal sets his knife down and cocks his head at Will, fixing him with a steady regard. Will glances at him, but keeps chopping, visibly uncomfortable that Hannibal isn't laughing.

Hannibal relents. He knows why Will makes his little jokes. "He hasn't kept dogs for many years, but he loves them. And my aunt will love your furniture. And my sister loves you."

"If you're happy, I'm happy," Will says softly. He means it, and Hannibal intuits it within the parameters of his familial foreignness. He is uncomfortable, but navigating it.

"I am," he assures gently.

Will smiles, only a little crooked, and then throws a potato chunk at him. Hannibal catches it, feigning outrage and starting after Will as he drops his knife and skips out of reach with a laugh. Not out of range, though. Only good reflexes keep the returned missile from hitting him square in the chest.

"And you, a gentleman!"

Hannibal just smirks. He goes back to chopping, but the tension is broken. When he feels Will's warmth behind him, he relaxes for a moment, until a hand dunked in the flour of the waiting biscuits makes a sound, cloudy slap on his chest. Hannibal closes his eyes.

"The biscuits -"

"Are unscathed," Will assures. "You should know a Southern boy has more respect than that."

"Yes, for biscuits," Hannibal tuts.

Will noses at his ear. "I'll do the laundry."

"Am I to assume you aren't hungry?" Hannibal wonders, but then Will tugs him round by his waist ties and kneels down. No assumption is really necessary. Will gives him a grin anyway as he undoes his flies. Hannibal can't help smiling back, but he has to take a deep breath too.

"You look very good in this suit," Will assures him. His eyes are already wandering, back to Hannibal's shorts.

"Is that why you keep throwing food at it?"

"The cardinal sin," Will murmurs, fingers tracing lightly over the straining dark fabric of his shorts.

"Some would think." He shivers lightly. "Will..."

"Hannibal?" He says it in that way that makes Hannibal's stomach twist, pulling his underwear down carefully. Then he leans in and inhales, and Hannibal shivers again. "Smell so good," Will whispers.

"I take it you don't mean dinner," Hannibal says lightly.

"Don't make me say something we'll both regret," Will pleads, nosing into the line of his cock, beard dragging against Hannibal's bared thigh, the jewel-blue fabric of his tailored trousers hanging unceremoniously around his knees now.

"Then let me help," Hannibal rasps, grasping his cock and pressing the head to his lips.

Will grasps the excess fabric of his slacks and sinks down on his cock with a pleased hum. His hands gently clench and loosen, bracing himself on Hannibal's thighs, trusting him to hold them both up. Hannibal braces his hands against the counter with a shaky sigh.

Will is sucking him now without any need for guidance, dark head bobbing eagerly. He's ruthlessly exploiting everything he knows about giving Hannibal pleasure. And that's quite a lot.

Breaths stuttering, Hannibal closes his eyes and lets it flow over him. He touches Will's curls gently. He feels the movement of Will's lips and tongue and softly breathes his name. He's more intent than Hannibal has ever seen him, mouth moving back and forth slickly, fast. Hannibal is hypnotized by him. And suddenly starving for him.

He strokes Will's hair back and gently flexes his hips, wetting his lower lip in anticipation when Will looks up at him with those eyes, the corner of his mouth crooking in a smile. His mouth is so pink against his glossy beard, obscenely stretched. He curls one of his hands around Hannibal, swallowing him deep enough for his throat to flicker.

Hannibal groans, stroking over his cheek. "Will-" It's gently warning.

A tiny shake of his head. Hannibal tightens his hands in his hair gently. He pulls, half a mind to push him back, but Will resists. In fact, he seems to go faster, increasing the tension on his scalp. Intrigued - and breathless - Hannibal keeps it up. Will only groans and swallows, throat making soft wet sounds. His circling hand strokes harder.

Hannibal can't take his eyes off him even as his spine curves with tension. His breaths quicken. The desire blooms up through him like smoke.

"Darling," he breathes.

Will hums with pleasure. Hannibal can't hold back. His hips jerk without his control, and the world goes quiet. Somehow, he stays on his feet.

"Will," he gasps.

Will, who is swallowing him down without pause, warm squeezes of his mouth and tongue. When he meets Hannibal's gaze, he lets him out of his mouth with an obscene pop. Hannibal mutters under his breath in French.

"What was that?" Will smiles.

"It doesn't translate," Hannibal sighs. "But it was very admiring."

"Mm, that sounds promising," Will whispers.

Hannibal gently lifts him by his elbows. "Very."

Will carefully fastens him back up, then kisses him lightly. "I'll let you get on, mm?"

Hannibal practically chokes. "You -"

"Me?" His eyes are so bright tonight, his hair looking darker in the new lighting of the kitchen; Hannibal can't stop looking. He's speechless. So he doesn't speak. Instead, he cups Will's face and kisses him again.

It takes a few minutes before they're ready to start cooking again. Will takes Hannibal's flour-dusted waistcoat to be put in the dry-cleaning basket upstairs, and then he pours them both drinks and carries on dicing vegetables, perfectly composed. As if he didn't just - Hannibal's mind has entirely slipped its track. And the glint in Will's eye says he's enjoying it.

"You haven't had a look at the bedroom," Will observes.

"Will," Hannibal says evenly, perhaps stating the obvious, "if we go up there right now, we are not coming back down."

"Sounds all right to me," Will grins down at his hands.

Hannibal surveys the vegetables spread out over the counter and does a mental survey of their salvageability.

"I put up the bed frame earlier," Will continues, nonchalance palpable. Utterly shameless. Hannibal can't look at him, or he's not sure they'll even make it upstairs for sensibility's sake.

"This is brazen," he whispers.

"I can be more brazen, if you like."

"I'm not sure I would survive the experience."

"Wanna find out?"

Hannibal contains himself to a single exhale. "Very much so."

He sets the knife down and reaches for the bowl of biscuit dough, placing it carefully in the fridge.

When he closes it, Will is taking off his shirt. That's just unfair. Hannibal is enthralled by his cunning, watching rapt as Will unbuttons his jeans, and shucks both those and his shorts down until he's wearing nothing but a grin.

“C’mon then, darlin’.” Then he heads for the stairs without a look back.

Hannibal picks up his clothes, folds them, and then follows with them held to his chest. He breathes slowly and evenly through his nose.

In their bedroom, he raises his eyes to finally survey the finish of the room, but he's distracted by the sight of Will sprawled on their new bed, one hand between his thighs.

"Do you want me to actually look at the room?" he rasps.

"Not if it means you're not looking at me."

"Just as well," Hannibal whispers. "I'm not looking at anything else."

"Good," Will's pink tongue skims the bow of his upper lip as his hand moves faster.

"Do you - do you want me to do anything other than look?"

"Yes, I do," Will laughs softly.

Hannibal steps to the side of the bed, hands going slowly to his shirt buttons.

"Oh, no, you don't need to do that," Will giggles. "I think you know what I want, and where I want it."

"And you'd prefer I remained fully clothed for it?"

"Well..." Will shrugs expressively. "For now."

Raising his eyebrows, Hannibal gestures. "Very well."

He kneels onto the mattress, watching as Will shifts his thighs even wider. If he looked appetizing downstairs, now he's downright mouth-watering. He's still stroking himself, all flush and pink and visibly wet, tip of his tongue poking between his lips, eyes alight with feeling. He's watching Hannibal unwaveringly.

"I'm waiting for your mouth," he purrs.

"I'm just trying to pick it up off the floor," Hannibal assures him. He licks his own lips. Then he gathers himself enough to pause Will's hand with a gesture. "Kneel up for me."

Will makes a face, but pushes himself up onto his knees. It smoothes out when Hannibal settles himself smoothly on his back on the sheets, and gently tugs around and Will over his shoulders. "Ohh," he moans softly as his heat and Hannibal's lips collide.

He's soft and plush under his tongue, tasting sharp and sweet. Hannibal doesn't even have the patience to tease, just to lick inside.

"Oh yeah-" Will grips the headboard, pelvis tilting, letting Hannibal lick for a moment before he rocks down. "The accent wall," he pants, "looks great."

Looking up at him, Hannibal just sucks his cock into his mouth with a hum. He keeps a steady suction, caressing with his tongue. Will isn't looking at the wall now, he's looking at Hannibal, eyes hazy and lips parted. Hannibal gazes back up at him.

He can see more of his tremoring belly, and his heaving chest. He looks like a satyr at a revel. Curls in his eyes, lashes down. Hannibal commits the image to memory as he works Will's cock, hands creeping to his hips.

He can feel the rhythm settling over them both. The motions of Hannibal's mouth coupled with Will's breaths, the arch of his back like a chord progression as he lifts into pleasure. Hannibal can feel the wetness on his chin, both Will's and his own. His jaw aches pleasantly from the pressure, Will's body caging him in the only way he's ever cared to be incapacitated. They both know it. Now, Will lifts his hips like he needs a moment, panting softly, and Hannibal gulps in a breath too.

"Can I have more?" Will whispers.

"Anything," Hannibal gasps. He almost regrets it when Will shifts down his body, but then he's unbuttoning Hannibal's shirt at leisure, stroking up his chest.

In the dim blue room he's ivory and gold and pink, an angel with a sinful gaze. Hannibal lets Will lap the taste of himself from the corners of his mouth as he unfastens Hannibal's suit trousers once more; reaches inside to stroke him. He's not hard again quite yet, but anything Will wants, Will can have.

The thought of it is enough to make Hannibal's eyes sting: truly, he's never known such a heaviness as the weight of how much he genuinely adores this man; worships him and endeavors with all he is to bring him contentment in whatever capacity he's able. It's a marvel to him that he could ever feel this way for anyone but his family - truthfully, he wasn't fully convinced he was capable of it, not of this kind of mad, desperate devotion.

"Hannibal," Will whispers, watching him from his perch on his thighs.

"Yes, Will." He strokes his curls, getting wild again.

"I love you," he tells him, hand paused mid-motion. "And god, I want you so much."

"It is astoundingly mutual, Will."

His breath catches with the overwhelming squeeze of Will's hand working him to hardness again. He's entirely effortless, coy and sure of himself now in a way that makes Hannibal's mouth water. He watches avidly as Will rises up on his knees to take him in.

"Come on," he tells Hannibal softly, "you can touch me..."

Hannibal starts with his lips, a covetous press of fingers against the peachy swell, letting Will suck at his fingertips briefly before he trails his hand slowly down the entire front of his torso. Will tucks his chin down as he focuses on riding himself on Hannibal's cock, his lashes fluttering, lips parted. He feels hot and wet and alive around Hannibal, every move of his body smooth.

Hannibal strokes the soft skin drawn tight over his hipbone. "Beautiful boy-"

Will moans softly, catching Hannibal's fingers and squeezing them. Their hands zipper together, Will's movements growing in urgency, and then he's moaning low and uncontrolled like he can't help it, one of Hannibal's favorite sounds from him. Hannibal moves his free hand to stroke him gently.

"The only thing with wanting you so much is I want you every way at once," Will breathes, almost to himself it seems.

"I know," Hannibal says helplessly. He lets his thumb circle over the tip of his cock before he sits up and tips Will down onto the mattress. He enjoys the look of surprise on his face when he does it. Even more so when he skims his fingers down to where he's soft and open; further back between his cheeks. "Perhaps we could try a couple of ways at once?" he reasons.

"Fuck, yes," Will mumbles. He's gone pink in the way that means he's shy of asking, and though Hannibal loves him, he so dearly loves to push, too.

"Fingers," he asks pleasantly, "or would you prefer something else?"

Will's mouth opens and shuts a few times. "Oh, god, yeah, something else - I want your hands on me."

“My hands, and my eyes.”

“All of you.” He grins, tugging him down gently to kiss him.

"Well, unless you've rearranged all our drawers as well, let me go get that for us," Hannibal murmurs.

Will raises his eyebrows with a sly little grin. "You can have one too y'know. If you want."

Hannibal smiles. "It's your turn to be the center of attention, darling."

"We can both be center of attention-" Will catches him before he pulls away, with another urgent kiss to give him.

"You," Hannibal says firmly when he pulls away, pliant after more kisses. He watches Will turn onto his side, sighing and touching himself lazily again in Hannibal's absence. Hannibal wants to watch, but he thinks Will might be too impatient for that. He might be too, if he's honest.

He finds their toys in the usual drawer - the new nightstands look well, he notices - and digs out a plug. If he's a little clumsier than usual as he wipes it and gathers the other supplies, well, he's distracted. Thoroughly distracted. Will looks like a dream he's had, bare and shameless, stroking himself with a blush creeping down his chest, the navy hues of their room making his skin warm and his hair and beard glossy dark.

"You gonna stay there?" Will chuckles.

"Patience," Hannibal sighs, but he's already on his feet like a boomerang.

"What's that?"

"Nothing you need worry about, darling."

"Thank god."

Hannibal joins him again, hands full. He lets himself be tugged down into another few long, heated kisses when he's deposited his arm full on the bed.

"My love," he breathes.

"Hi," Will hums. He rolls over lazily to let Hannibal prep him. He looks so plush, rosy and glossy where he's arching up for Hannibal's automatically wandering fingers, that Hannibal can't help leaning down for a taste. Will gasps softly under the attention, arching for the exploration of his tongue.

When he feels him shivering, Hannibal pulls back, slicks his fingers and finds his opening, circling and gently pressing in. He kisses the small of Will's back; reaches under him to rub over his cock slowly.

At that, Will gasps, muscles contracting and releasing. Hannibal sighs to feel it around his finger; there's something about being inside Will that sets off something primal and urgent in him. They both have equal appreciation for the varied ways they can fuck, but this is something different, something entirely special. Hannibal stays gentle as he strokes deeper, watching the curve of Will's cheek; listening to him softly panting. He opens up so beautifully.

"Love your hands so much," Will drawls, voice a little muffled.

Hannibal hums agreement. "And my hands love you."

He keeps them moving. Watches Will undulate and move into his touch. He makes little noises of pleasure as Hannibal strokes his insides in turn.

"Hannibal," he warns softly, voice pitching up in that familiar way.

"Are you ready then?" Hannibal murmurs.

"Yeah - yes, please."

"Very well." Hannibal reaches for the plug, gets it well-coated and ready. It goes in easy, with a staggered little cry from Will, and then he's shifting carefully back onto his side, tugging Hannibal with some urgency.

"Feels full," he groans. "More please."

Hannibal is helpless to resist. He sets one hand to Will's thigh and the other to his waist where he's twisted, using him for purchase as he slips himself easily back into his cunt. He wants to growl with pleasure. Will actually does.

"Hannibal, my god-" a little of his accent curling in with his pleasure makes Hannibal hum.

"Full enough, my love?"

"Oh yeah," he's knuckling the bed sheets, glowing bright in the warmth of the copper wall. Hannibal couldn't have designed a more fitting setting for him. He's radiant, curls tossed with their motions like evening waves. Hannibal is overtaken by his admiration.

He curbs it with a few more fierce snaps of his hips. The sensation is intense. Will feels tight, hot and slicker than ever. This is good. This is good for them both. And Hannibal is completely enthralled by the sounds Will makes, as well as the bright peek of the silver plug between his pale cheeks. He's so lovely. Lovelier than Hannibal deserves, if he were honest with himself.

He sets a hand to the small of Will's back. His shoulders are begging to be kissed, muscle and tan and the small, neat scar. Hannibal sets his lips to the dip of his spine. Feels Will's fingers in his hair.

"S'good," he drawls.

"It's better than good," Hannibal agrees.

They move together with greater urgency. Will is making soft, desperate noises, expression blissful. Hannibal reaches around to stroke him. He kneads his cock gently between his fingers, listening to the music of Will's vocalizations coupled with the wet clicks of their skin.

"You feel so tight," he whispers.

"M'so full," Will breathes, "you're so much, god-"

Hannibal groans softly.

"Will," he presses kisses to his jaw and cheek, "Will..."

"Keep moving," Will groans.

As if he could stop. As if he would.

He can feel Will drawing tighter around him, little spasming clenches that have them both groaning. Hannibal can't stop kissing him. Gripping him, moving him into his thrusts. He holds him tight at the hips and rocks them together.

"Hannibal," Will gasps. He rocks back and forth as much as he can. It's lovely in and of itself, watching him move. But when he moans and tosses his head, Hannibal snugs their hips together and thrusts harder.

"Fuck," he hears Will breathe, "fuck, I'm-"

Oh, Hannibal knows. He urges Will through the crest of his orgasm with his hands and his hips, feeling the way he clenches down hard. He keeps gently rocking throughout. Sees the moment it turns to too much. He grits his teeth and withdraws.

Will turns over, reaching for him urgently. Hannibal breathes hard, feeling hands skim over his skin. He can't take his eyes off Will; his taut belly and the dark hair climbing down between his hips. The way his thighs glisten and slide. He meets Hannibal's gaze, and beckons him down.

"Come on, darling."

Hannibal shifts gently, settles down on top of him with a sigh, moving with Will's coaxing hands to grind against him. He rides his cock against the jut of his hipbone. Their cheeks drag together and he can feel Will's breath.

"Yeah?" Will whispers.

"Perfect." He's so close, and the drag of Will's skin is so good.

"Come on, baby," Will purrs. He gets his hands around the globes of Hannibal's ass and squeezes.

"Will-" Hannibal grits. He jerks forward several more times. Will still seems so desperate for him. Hannibal chokes out another heaving breath and comes all over his lovely flat stomach.

Will's voice is gentle as he strokes up Hannibal's back slowly. "That was good, baby."

"You have such a talent for understatement."

"Yeah, s'pose I do," he slurs.

Hannibal laughs and hides a kiss in the crook of his shoulder. "I love it."

"I love you."

"I know," Hannibal tells him, pressing their foreheads together briefly.

Will shifts, perhaps on the verge of uncomfortable. "I better get uh- derubbered."

"Let me, darling."

Will bites his lip, a blush creeping across his cheeks. "You just wanna look."

"Nothing wrong with that." He kneels back to touch between Will's thighs, peering with poorly disguised admiration.

Will laughs softly. "I think you'd crawl inside me if you could."

Hannibal just laughs. "Wouldn't you?"

"God yes," Will purrs. He makes a soft, helpless noise when Hannibal touches the rubber base, spreads his thighs to let him ease it gently free. Will still makes a soft noise at the sensation. He seems boneless and heavy when Hannibal sets it aside; maybe in need of contact.

Hannibal is in need of contact, too. He lowers himself down, and Will wraps his arms around him tightly. He nudges his chin up with his nose.

"All right, Doctor Lecter-Graham?"

"Perfect," Hannibal says honestly. Even with the interrupted dinner.

"You are perfect," Will agrees. Hannibal snorts gently and strokes his hair. They lie like that for a few achy, pleasant minutes, and then Will sighs. "It does smell a bit like a penny."

Hannibal just laughs. "It will fade."

"I hope so," Will says idly.

Hannibal looks up at the burnished surface, just as he'd imagined it. "It makes you look like a Greek hero."

"You know you're a little obsessed, right?"

"I was somewhat aware." Hannibal says it evenly. He's floating in a cloud of contentment. Will doesn't sound overly worried, fingers carding through his hair. Hannibal shifts so his head is against his chest instead. Will touches his chest in turn, hand over his heart, fingernails gently scratching fine hair. It's a pleasant rasp of sensation, gentle and repeated.

"We need to stop pretending we're going to eat dinner before we fuck," Will murmurs.

Hannibal sighs. "We sometimes manage it."

He can feel Will's chuckle in his chest. It's a warm, immersive feeling, under the covers, in the copper and slate gloom of their room. Their lair, really. He hopes never to leave. Will is making sure they don't have to.

Hannibal thinks he might be falling asleep, and truly, what a departure this is from their old lives. He will have to attempt to work a lovely dinner back into their routine, though. Perhaps

just a later one. He strokes up Will's side at the thought. They'll compromise, as always. Will is surprisingly good at it. It's important to them both.

"Will," Hannibal says sleepily, "do you like the décor?"

"Don't you think I would have said as they put it up if I didn't?"

"I'm just checking."

"I like everything you do," Will murmurs.

"That sentiment is entirely mutual." He takes a deep contented breath.

"I'm so tired," Will mumbles, "but I'm also starving."

"I wonder why that is."

"Is it too late?" Will grins. "Have I missed my window?"

Hannibal sighs. "Never."

Will nuzzles him gently. "Very starving," he says.

"We can't have that." Finally Hannibal sits up. He accepts a kiss as payment for getting out of bed and going to start the shower, Will shuffling after him a few moments later.

They brush up against each other a few times as they clean up. Then it's back downstairs, to actually prepare dinner. Hannibal does it unmolested this time. Will walks the dogs, and when he comes home his curls are tossed by the wind and his cheeks are pink. Hannibal nearly gives it all up as a lost cause again. But Will seems sweetly chaste as he kisses Hannibal before they sit down to eat, even going so far as to whirl his glass under his nose before he takes a sip. Hannibal waits with amusement for his pronouncement on the wine.

"Smells like wine," Will confirms eventually, then takes a sip, a smile hiding at the rim of his glass.

"Desperately happy to hear it."

Will smiles at him wider as he cuts into his dinner. "Why doesn't my being obtuse annoy you?"

"At risk of sounding flippant..." Hannibal smiles, "I've seen worse. And none of them were you."

Will raises his eyebrows, but he just shrugs. "Don't get me wrong, I'm pleased."

"I know," Hannibal murmurs. "And for the record, the primary reason it does not irritate me is your intent."

"To push your buttons?"

"Rather the opposite. We are ourselves around those we trust, you don't guard yourself around me." He looks up at Will.

"I love you so much," Will translates slowly, one of his wry twists coming to his mouth, "that I'm extra unpleasant to you."

"If you like." He chuffs a breath. "Take now, for instance, when you deliberately misunderstand me to avoid acknowledging my understanding. Cunning, really."

He sees the ghost of a smile.

"You're a lucky man," Will quips, "dinner is beautiful, thank you, by the way."

"My pleasure," Hannibal replies. "It turned out well."

"It always does."

"It does, doesn't it?" Hannibal muses, taking his hand.

Will grins at him. "Yeah, Hannibal. Always."

Chapter 4

Another couple of weeks wind by in their usual pattern of chaos interspersed with drowsy evenings and content sleep. The house changes around them slowly, and finally the last of the equipment arrives for the kitchen and Will unveils it to Hannibal, all gleaming white granite counters and striking red walls.

The extension is of course still underway, meaning the kitchen currently backs onto a half-constructed area where the back porch used to be, but that's workable for the time being.

In the meantime, Will finds a weekend to fit the new bathroom fixtures – gold to compliment Hannibal's royal blue tiles, antique and in mint condition. Everything is coming together.

For his part, Hannibal tentatively secures a potential lease for a new practice space in Virginia, not too far from the house, and while the contracts turn over he limits his visits to the Baltimore office to once a week while he starts to pack everything that he would rather movers not handle.

In the meantime, Hannibal has started wedding preparations with rather more enthusiasm than he's sure Will would sanction, some of which send him on some interesting errands seeking out the right flowers, the right decorations, and of course inspiration for the cake.

It might be the world's smallest wedding ceremony, he says to Mischa during one of their many email exchanges, *but it will be beautiful*. Because it's for them.

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Despite trusting Hannibal implicitly, Will still has a strange feeling of apprehension when they drive to Madame Varma's studio. It's not long until the wedding now, and he has been dodging Hannibal's suggestions of fittings for long enough that he finally just told Will they had an appointment today.

Will doesn't blame him: he's pushed it. Now, he's trying to remember not to make a permanent association between suits and being *exposed*. This isn't the opera. Things are so different since then, the last vestiges of hiding from one another all but ripped away. And the woman herself is wonderful.

"What colors are we wearing?" Will asks, to distract himself.

"I thought cream, possibly silver grey. Madame will have her own ideas, of course."

"Cream for you," Will surmises, "grey for me."

He watches Hannibal smile. "Unless you'd like cream too."

"I'll let Madame choose," he says, daringly.

Hannibal flashes him a grin. "She is the authority."

"My thoughts exactly." He reaches over to squeeze Hannibal's hand.

"Come on, Will." Hannibal smiles at him softly. "It won't be like last time."

"I know," Will nods.

They get out of the car, walking hand in hand into the studio after ringing the buzzer. Madame has a new assistant, it seems, a handsome young individual that Will recognizes instantly as gender-non-conforming in some capacity, but she sends them off for tea as soon as Hannibal and Will are escorted in.

"How are you, darlings?" she asks warmly, sweeping Hannibal up to the counter immediately and hoisting out several bolts of pale fabric samples.

"Keeping busy," Will says wryly when he sees Hannibal is distracted.

"This one's specialty." She smiles at Hannibal knowingly.

"Don't I know it."

"I'm not the one who just rebuilt half our house with a team of three in three months," Hannibal says mildly.

Madame makes a noise of interest, and also frustration. "I'll have to re-measure you if you've been bulking up, Mr. Graham."

Will turns pink. "Uh-"

"Guilty," Hannibal puts in.

"Not on purpose," Will blushes.

"Then we'll start with updating your measurements, I still have your muslin from your last fitting," Madame says, gesturing Will to the pedestal. He continues to blush as the assistant – Quinn, Madame calls them - comes to check his measurements. "Hmm." Writing them down as Quinn calls them out, Madame Varma tuts. "Yes, I'll need to adjust your pattern slightly. No matter."

"Sorry," Will laughs, as Madame Varma comes now, whipping out her own tape measure with a suspicious look and gracefully ushering Quinn aside.

“Let me see that.” She measures his waist, then clucks. "And of course, this bit has gotten smaller somehow."

"Now that I can't believe, with Hannibal’s cooking."

She sniffs. "Come look at fabrics, Mister Graham."

He follows her, still blushing.

The swatches she lays out could be a velvety bank of storm clouds on the table. He scans over them, unsure how he could ever find grey so arresting. But she picks three almost immediately, and drapes them over his arm. He immediately looks to Hannibal for input.

Hannibal picks up another swatch the color of aged scrimshaw and drapes it over one of the three.

"Contrasting double breasted?" Madame asks.

Hannibal nods. "Make my suit from the ivory, and I'll wear a charcoal shirt."

"Perfect." She gives Will a smile. "Agreeable?"

"Just happy to be here," Will chuckles.

"Liar. Ivory shirt for you, I think. Will there be flowers?"

Will looks at Hannibal again. "There will be," Hannibal murmurs. "Just simple boutonnières."

"Colors?"

"Deep reds, some corals and peaches too."

Will glances at him, then smiles.

"Quite so," Madame Varma hums, noting everything down in an elegant hand.

Will waits then while Hannibal goes over the other details that Will would never even have considered - cuffs and lapels and buttons, linings (embroidered with their initials, of course), and of course trouser fastenings. He remembers this, from before. Hannibal's quiet competence.

Sipping his tea on the sofa, Will stays out of the way and tries not to look too openly admiring. He probably fails, but at least he's not being poked and prodded anymore.

But then, of course, that changes.

"Will?" Hannibal seeks out eye contact. "I have one more thing I was hoping you'd indulge me in."

He stands up. "What's that?"

Hannibal glances at Madame Varma, who wordlessly goes and retrieves a suit bag. Will frowns up at his fiancé.

"Surprises," he says mildly, "my favorite."

Hannibal's expression stays serene. "Surprise is the nature of gifts, usually," he points out gently, "I don't want you to feel underdressed on our honeymoon."

Will very carefully does not communicate what he hopes to be wearing on their honeymoon. And how underdressed he wanted to be. He lets Madame lift the suit from the bag.

It's luxe on another level. It's a rich midnight blue that Will isn't sure if he's ever quite seen the likes of - except on their bedroom walls.

"It's velvet," he says dubiously. "Won't that be too - hot?"

"It is for evening wear and should be fine. The others are more weather appropriate for the day."

"Others?" Will stutters.

"Two," Hannibal soothes, taking his hands gently. "More casual."

"It's so much, Hannibal -"

"I have an account, it's not costing me anymore than it normally would."

Will makes himself stop arguing. Hannibal's finances are something to which he's had to accustom himself. It's none of his business - everything Hannibal had ordered for the kitchen after the house had sold had been... rather out of Will's price range, and comping out of the force hadn't left him a poor man. But Hannibal is generous to a fault.

"Thank you," he says helplessly: after all, what else is there to say? And he is thankful, truly.

"You're welcome," Hannibal purrs.

"They'll be ready by the end of the week," Madam interjects. Perhaps she's also entirely aware of what that honeyed-warmth in Hannibal's eyes means.

"But this one just needs alterations," Hannibal agrees, "so, would you mind?"

"I'll try it on," Will murmurs.

He sees the pleasure of it light Hannibal up like candlelight through quartz, and so he can’t grumble too much as he follows Quinn to the changing room. There's a shirt too, not quite black. Will can see, when he gets it on, that the colors are entirely perfectly chosen. God, even the lining is beautiful. He runs his fingers up and down the patterned silk, then slips the buttons through their holes and adjusts his cuffs.

"Will?" Hannibal's voice at the door. "May I come in a moment?"

"Of course," Will calls back. "I'm just - I'm ready."

He unlatches the door, and Hannibal comes in with a small, velvet box that he opens to Will with a small smile. "Cufflinks."

Will holds out one wrist. "Yours?"

"Yes, they are. I think they suit you better."

Will bites his lip, relieved to a degree - too many gifts in one day. "They're beautiful."

Hannibal's eyes travel slowly from Will's feet to his curls.

"Ah," Will says knowingly, "looks like I will spend at least some of the honeymoon not wearing suits..."

"I know you will," Hannibal murmurs. He adjusts Will's collar gently. "You look perfect," he whispers.

Will tries to remember that Hannibal *always* thinks he looks perfect. "You shouldn't be with me behind a locked door right now," he laughs.

"It's not locked," Hannibal replies. "And Madame is not that tolerant."

"Hence the reason you should leave now."

"I don't want to," Hannibal murmurs.

"I don't want you to." Will smiles. "But I don't want Madame to kick us out either."

"Understood." Hannibal sates himself with one soft kiss. At least, Will thinks he'll accept it. For now.

"Don't you need to do yours?"

"I've already been, Will."

"Oh, right." Will snorts a bit: he's the one who's been putting off getting his wedding tux fitted, normal people are excited about this sort of thing. "Of course."

"It's no matter, love. Perhaps I ought to -" Hannibal motions toward the door.

"You ought." Will gives him one last kiss. "Go."

He is a little sad that he listens. Sad enough that he quietly endures the rest of the pinning and tucking before he can take the suit off, in the hopes of speeding things along. Smiling like he knows exactly what he's doing, Hannibal sips tea and waits.

Finally, they're bidding Madame and Quinn a grateful good evening and returning to the car. Hannibal seems quiet, but clearly satisfied. There's a rigidness to his stature that Will knows instinctively, like a scent to the air.

Glancing over at him, he quirks an eyebrow.

"Can you wait until we get home or do you wanna find a lay-by?" When Hannibal stays quiet, Will laughs. "Oh my god, you're considering that really hard."

Hannibal merely smiles, completely unapologetic.

"Oh my god," Will mumbles again. The car is slowing down.

"A lay-by," Hannibal muses, still sounding like he's testing it out, "or a hotel?"

"Our house is not *that* far," Will sighs.

When Hannibal just gives him another one of those smiles, he can't help once more but indulge him.

Will is sorely tempted by both.

"You too fancy to fuck in a car, darlin'?" He licks his lips at the flush that rises on Hannibal's cheek.

"Difficult for me to get my mouth on you in a car, more to the point."

"Oh, is that the plan?"

"Always." He glances at Will again as he pulls up in front of a hotel - one Will sincerely doubts is a by-the-hour sort of place. Hannibal Lecter doesn't do things halfway. Any things.

"God, I would have hated you ten years ago."

"Would you like to go inside while I park?"

"Yes," Will says thoughtfully. "Yes, I'll go have a drink at the bar."

"Better make it a short." Hannibal kisses him briskly before Will gets out.

"You ought to meet me there," Will tells him.

"We'll see."

He's hoping Hannibal does as he's suggested. They could have a little fun.

In the hotel bar, he orders two drinks and takes them over to a corner table, suddenly glad Hannibal gently prompted him to wear a semi-smart outfit for the fitting today: a button down and newish trousers. Waiting for Hannibal in a Henley and jeans would have had its own naughty appeal, though.

He thinks about that as he sips his drink, waiting. Sometimes he likes being Hannibal's bit of rough. Sometimes he likes being the one calling the shots. It's a damn shame they didn't anticipate this, he could have packed supplies. They'll just have to work with what they have.

"May I join you?"

As much as he thinks he could hear it a million miles off and recognize just the tone, Will still marvels at the newness of it in the setting. He looks up at his fiancé and smiles.

"I do happen to have an extra drink."

"How forward thinking of you."

"It might have been for me." Will looks up, eyebrow crooked.

"A gentleman as good looking as you, getting through a single drink alone? Highly improbable."

"And here I am. Not alone." Will gives Hannibal a warm look.

"Proving the rule." Hannibal sits down smoothly.

Will nudges the glass toward him. It's good scotch - this is an expensive whim.

"Thank you." Hannibal takes a sip. "So, what brings you here?"

"The drive home seemed insurmountably long," Will replies. "And yourself?"

"Sometimes a change in routine, even a beloved one, can be beneficial."

"You talk like a psychiatrist," Will says with an evil gleam in his eye.

"Guilty as charged." Hannibal dips his chin.

"Oh, so I'm right. Are you psychoanalyzing me, Doctor?" Will lets his lips twitch.

"Merely an analysis of the likelihood of tempting you to a nightcap with a psychiatrist."

"I may just make an exception for you."

"What gives me that accolade?"

"I think I like the look of you. Maybe it's that suit," Will teases.

"It certainly is a nice suit, though I must admit I'm feeling tragically overdressed."

Will sips his drink. "Something I could help with, Doctor?"

"I believe it might be."

Will hums innocently. "Tell me how?"

"I have a room, with a well-stocked bar and little else."

"You think I could add something to that equation?"

"Many things, ideally."

"Let's find out, then." Will whirls his drink gently, draining the last mouthful. He sets the glass gently back on the tabletop.

Hannibal leaves the rest of his own. Standing gracefully, he offers his hand. Will takes it with a smile.

"Are you planning on telling me your name?" he murmurs as Hannibal leads him out.

"Do you require it?"

"I suppose if you answer to 'Doctor'..."

"I wager I'd answer to anything you deign to call me."

Will lets his lips curve again. "Then I shall have to call you ‘brave’."

"Do your worst," Hannibal replies. "I am at your service."

This is new - or at least as far as verbal declarations go. Then again, they're versions of themselves tonight, aren't they?

Will wets his lips, and nods. "Lead the way."

He's quite thoroughly led. The room Hannibal has bought out is nothing short of spectacular, understated in its elegance and yet loud nonetheless. It looks like the kind of place Hannibal would pick, to be a – setting, maybe to a painting, or a daydream. Will wonders absently if Hannibal engineered this in its entirety, and decided he wouldn't put it past him.

"Seems psychiatry pays well."

"It can." Hannibal takes his coat, politely.

"If you're a good psychiatrist?"

"Just so."

"Then you must be very good."

"I am," Hannibal agrees, hanging up their coats and turning to him in shirtsleeves. Will can't get over the way he looks so vulnerable, even with his chin angled up with expectation. There's an almost feminine edge to the way he defers to Will with body language. A voice in Will's head calls it a 'come hither' edge. He's never seen Hannibal attempt it before. He never normally needs to: Will is usually all too eager.

Now, he raises a hand, and beckons Hannibal closer. It's a *gift*, to be the one calling the shots. Not that they're ever at anything but equilibrium usually, gently tugging back and forth - but this is the scales rightly tipped. Will smiles as he meets Hannibal's eyes. He looks so completely, humblingly at ease.

"Would you like another drink?" Will asks politely.

"I think that's my line, isn't it?"

"Perhaps, but you didn't finish your last one. Unless you had something else on your mind?"

"Whatever could that be?"

"I think you ought to tell me," Will says calmly.

"I'm open to new experiences. I'd like to offer us both one."

"I'd like to accept," Will replies.

"I'm pleased to hear it." He steps closer.

It's impossible not to meet him in the middle, their bodies close, warm between. Will smiles, meeting Hannibal's warm amber eyes.

"I can't take my eyes off you," he tells him, sincerely.

"I'd really rather you didn't," Hannibal says. "It’s certainly mutual."

Will has to cup his cheeks then; run his thumbs over the cut of his cheekbones. "Then I won't."

He pulls him down for a kiss. Hannibal's arms curl around his waist. He fits perfectly here, as always. Even as much as he adores him, he's prickled by the thrill of this game.

"Aren't you eager to please?" he observes softly.

"An unusual state of affairs, I assure you."

"I feel honored."

"I’m glad."

Will lets his lips curve in a smile. "Tell me what you envision, Doctor."

"I'd like you to do what you want with me."

"I'd like to start by undressing you."

"Then what's stopping you?"

"Nothing at all."

He kisses him again, soft smears of lips down his jaw and throat as he starts to push the jacket off his shoulders. Hannibal moans, equally softly, like it surprises him.

"Pretty little sound," Will praises, throwing the jacket over a chair nearby, starting on the waistcoat.

Hannibal nods. "Yes."

"I'd like to hear another." He lets his teeth scrape at his larynx as he unloops his tie.

"Yes," Hannibal whispers.

His breaths are strained when Will strips him out of his shirt too; bends down to unlace his oxfords. He takes his time, hands unsteady, and sets them carefully aside before allowing himself to be distracted. He skims his hands slowly up wool-clad thighs, rasps the grain of his beard against the fabric over Hannibal's zipper, smiling at the soft gasp it elicits.

"What's this?" he murmurs. He turns his nose into the seam and purposefully lips against the obvious evidence of Hannibal's want there.

"Ah - I - oh, it's been a while since I've done this," Hannibal breathes, and it’s stunning – and unnerving – how good an actor he really is.

"That's criminal," Will whispers, lifting a hand to uncatch the fastening there.

It's also a total lie, unless, of course, he's talking about this hotel assignation. But then again, Will supposes, neither of these versions of them have done this, have they?

"I'll take such good care of you," he promises, inching down the zipper.

Hannibal's breath leaves him in a rush again, and he makes an inarticulate noise as Will hitches the trousers down his thighs, leaving them bunched for a moment so he can press his nose and mouth into the junction of Hannibal's thigh and inhale. Spicy cologne, skin, the tang of precome. He can't get him out of the trousers and socks fast enough.

Hannibal shivers when he stands again. One of his hands comes to lightly rest in Will's hair, not guiding, only holding. Will leans in for another kiss, hands wrapping around the now-bare skin of his waist. Their bodies press flush, no space between their hips until Will gently nudges a thigh between Hannibal's. He wishes he could feel his skin, but it's entirely too pleasant to catch glimpses of them in the room's mirrors. More than pleasant to feel Hannibal's muffled noise against his lips as his hips rock.

Will smiles. "How long has it been?" he asks softly.

"Not excessively," Hannibal admits.

"You seem - eager."

"Would you like me to seem less enthusiastic?"

"Not at, I love being with someone so... responsive."

"I could be more so."

Will strokes gently down his cheek. "Feel free."

He kisses him again softly, and then pulls back just enough to let Hannibal work his shirt off. He does so with worshipful hands. His fingers trace over his ribs, breath warm against Will's

lips.

"You are a sight to sate the greediest eyes."

"Now who's the one stealing lines?"

Hannibal merely laughs. "Overuse doesn't decrease its veracity."

"If you insist," Will grins. He steps back to unbuckle his own belt, smiling at Hannibal's eyes on him. "Don't look away."

"Why would I?"

"Go sit on the bed for me," Will murmurs.

He watches with pleasure spiking him as Hannibal lifts himself elegantly onto the bedspread. His man, so handsome, so obliging.

"Very good," Will praises, "you wanna take those shorts down for me?"

Hannibal nods, somehow managing to make even that look elegant. He casts them off, and Will looks over him readily as he moves to lift himself onto the bed, looking willowy and elegant, tan against the white sheets as he stretches his legs.

"God, baby." Will wets his lips at the sight. "Must be my lucky day."

"I know it's mine."

Grinning, Will kneels onto the end of the bed, hands smoothing up Hannibal's slender calves. "This is nice," he murmurs.

"Just nice?"

"Well, *very* nice."

"Very nice."

"Let me get my thesaurus out." Will flicks open an imaginary book. He pauses, hands waiting, but Hannibal just tilts his chin and leans back on one elbow, amused, gaze challenging.

"Beauteous," Will starts, like he's reading from a page, trying not to let his laughter splinter the word, "astonishing-"

"Captivating?" Hannibal offers. "Desirable?"

"Yep, that's in there. Stunning. Covetable."

"Come *here*," Hannibal begs softly.

"That's not on there," Will frowns, pretending to flip pages until Hannibal knees his supporting arm out from beneath him so he has no choice but to catch himself with the other. He finds himself over Hannibal, their noses almost touching.

“You made me drop my thesaurus.”

He has to kiss him, laughter warm between them. It quickly turns to something hotter. Will wraps his supporting arm under Hannibal’s neck, keeping him close as he reaches down. He cups a hand over him, feels Hannibal arch into the touch.

"Yes, you like that," he murmurs.

"I do," Hannibal assures, biting his lip when Will lets his palm soothe over the head of his cock in slow strokes, already so hard. Flattering, even if this is just all pretend.

"Gorgeous," Will praises. He leans down for another slow kiss, keeps his hand curled around the head of his cock, gently massaging, smearing fluid. Hannibal doesn't bother holding back his noises, just lets Will grow inebriated on the potency of his kisses.

Will keeps his eyes closed, sinking into the sensations. Hannibal's thigh is pressed up between his own now. He lets him grind down as he pleases. They're twined together completely, skin dragging, lips already raw.

Hannibal's hands find his ribs and the dip of his spine. He pulls Will down gently. Their lips part as they both draw breath.

"Can I have more?" Will whispers.

"Anything you want," Hannibal gasps.

"I want my fingers inside you."

With a groan, Hannibal nods. Will pulls back with one fleeting kiss and goes to his wallet, taking out a lubricated condom that he actually replaces with startling regularity nowadays. Hannibal just watches him, lips slightly parted.

"Touch yourself for me," Will purrs.

He watches Hannibal's big hand take over for his. The slide is so easy, the rosy head of his cock slipping between his fingers. His lids flutter a bit as he strokes.

Will can't take his eyes off him for a minute, heart pounding. Then he realizes he promised something more. He crosses back to the bed and rips open the foil, making sure not to spill any of the gel inside. Hannibal watches him lazily. His thighs spread quickly when Will nudges - eagerly, even.

"Very good," Will praises. He moves closer, settles down between Hannibal’s knees and drizzles some of the lube out from the foil onto his fingers. Hannibal won't want him to go slow, but he ought to play the game tonight. "All right?" he murmurs, reaching down,

caressing over the skin of his balls before he runs a finger down his taint and then twists his wrist to stroke lower.

"Yes," Hannibal says in a low voice. He gasps at the first gentle press, velvety warm and tight around Will's fingers. He leans to kiss the inside of his knee.

"Lovely," he murmurs.

Hannibal sighs his agreement. "Your hands…"

"Mm?" Will strokes his finger deeper, delicate surges and nudges.

"They're so good. Give me more," Hannibal begs softly.

Will complies in a smooth press, pointer and middle finger pressing in deep, thumb caressing tender skin. He crooks his fingers on the withdrawing stroke to find Hannibal's prostate, hears his soft, shocked inhalation and grins. He makes sure he's caught doing it.

Hannibal meets his gaze and exhales sharply through his teeth at another stroke. "Please-"

"Please what, baby?"

"Faster?" He arches, knees hitching further up against his chest.

"Oh, and you asked so politely."

"Please," Hannibal whispers again.

Will takes a breath and thrusts his fingers faster, deeper. He's as gentle as he can force himself to be, but it's hard when Hannibal's every breath sounds shocked out of his lungs.

"You take my fingers so nice," Will whispers. It makes Hannibal bare his teeth again, so he adds, "Touch yourself."

Another shaky groan as Hannibal complies. Now Will has something to watch. He can't stop touching him with his free hand. Tracing the silky skin stretched thin over his hipbones. He keeps fucking him with his fingers before he zeroes in; strokes the spot that makes his thighs shake over and over. He can see the clear fluid spill from between Hannibal's tunneled fingers. He's panting faster, his other hand fisting the sheets.

"That good?" Will smiles. "You look so damn pretty like this."

He can see the reaction to that stain his cheeks. Hannibal actually seems close to speechless, which is enough of a novelty that Will can't bring himself to tease him about it. He just licks his lips and keeps going. He can't stop looking at him like this, can't stop urging more of those noises out of him. Pushing him higher and higher.

He smears his face into Hannibal’s quaking belly and clutches him, kissing the skin there as he beckons faster. "That's it, baby."

Hannibal makes a soft noise, hips lifting. Will can feel him tightening around his fingers; feel his hand moving faster against Will's chest. His heart thunders against Will's ear. His breath hitches in that familiar way. He's so close, and trying to fight it.

Will gives him no reprieve, fingers stroking still. He listens to Hannibal's moan, biting his lip.

"God, you sound good," he whispers. He's filled with an inexpressible swell of love that leaves no room for role-playing. "Hannibal," he pleads softly. "Show me."

That triggers a soft cry, and he feels the way Hannibal strains for it, his free hand sliding into Will's hair and gripping tight. He holds him close as Hannibal pushes desperately into his own hand. He comes in hard pulses, against Will's chest and over his own, Will's fingers still pressing deep. He clenches down tight around them, spasms that leave them both gasping.

Will has to cup his face with his free hand and kiss him then. Long kisses, warm and intent on sharing. He can feel Hannibal trembling and twitching even as he gently extricates his fingers. He rests a gentling palm on Hannibal's stomach.

"Okay?" he whispers against his lips.

"Will," Hannibal breathes. He's apparently done role-playing too.

"Okay?" Will repeats gently, nudging their noses together.

Just a nod. He accepts a kiss with a shaky sigh. Will isn't used to him being so far inside himself. He's just a little worried about him, though, and he wraps his arms around him more securely and gently squeezes.

"I love you," he tells him.

"I love you," Hannibal echoes, squeezing his shoulder with his clean hand.

Will nuzzles the hand with his cheek. "Tell me what's going on?"

"I -" Hannibal takes a breath. "I missed being able to say your name, Will Graham."

"Lecter-Graham," Will corrects gently, nosing close.

He sees Hannibal smile. "Lecter-Graham," he agrees softly.

"Was that all, Doctor?" Will murmurs.

Hannibal's quiet is contemplative then, gaze still a little far away. Will nuzzles him again, because he can.

"I forget sometimes," Hannibal murmurs, "how daunting it can be, being understood."

"Are you daunted?"

"Constantly - but grateful all the same." He leans down to kiss Will again, briefly. "It's your turn."

"I wanna check you're okay first."

"I am. I promise."

Will can't move away yet. He needs to be sure. He holds Hannibal’s gaze.

"I think I missed you then," he admits with a laugh. Hannibal smiles.

"You seemed pretty sure of yourself."

"I'm very convincing when I want to be."

"You are."

"So are you."

"I would have done it," Hannibal murmurs, "if I'd have seen you in a hotel bar, instead of in my kitchen."

"I'd have wanted you to," Will says softly.

Hannibal kisses him once more. Will has to squeeze him again gently.

"I'm glad it happened the way it did."

"That's mutual." They breathe together for a moment, then Hannibal brushes their lips softly. "Now you," he says again.

Will smiles. "No arguments here."

He feels Hannibal's arms close around him, rolling him over, and relaxes against the pillows. This is a nice fucking hotel room. And his fiancé is pretty great too, gorgeous, flushed and mussed and sated. Looking so calm now, his raw-honey gaze on Will.

"I adore you," Will tells him, quietly.

"And I you," Hannibal murmurs back, kissing down his chest. He's so completely, openly besotted. He gives every part of Will's chest the same treatment, slow, soft kisses. A few flicks of his tongue to make him sigh. It's teasing but also cherishing.

Will touches his hair and kisses the crown of his head. Hannibal's hands ghost up and down his ribs. He pushes off with them and lets his cheek graze against Will through his shorts.

Will lets himself make the noise he wants to. It's not enough, but he's curiously overwhelmed. He's picking up on Hannibal's emotions, as always, even carefully cultivated as they are. He keens again, shivering as Hannibal nuzzles him.

"Baby," he sighs, as Hannibal starts to ease down his shorts.

"Relax, my love."

It's not easy, but it's easy to try. Will takes a deep breath and watches Hannibal lip down over the mound between his hips. His kisses are just as sweet and slow as ever.

Will turns his mouth into his hand to control his cries a little, but Hannibal runs a hand up his arm to pull it away. He's starting to lick Will with keen dedication, breaths quickening, at first just flat, slow strokes; then his tongue curls, and he sucks Will's cock gently into his mouth, cheeks hollowed with devoted attention.

Clutching Hannibal's hand to his chest, Will lets himself moan loud. Hannibal's other hand presses a star into his pale inner thigh, and he's spreading him wide, mouth making soft, wet sounds on Will's skin. Will moans again, higher this time. His hips arch helplessly.

"Fuck-"

God, it feels so good. He'd tabled his own desire for a moment, and it roars back to life now. It hooks into his belly and makes him tremble. He half wishes Hannibal hadn't already come, because having him inside him is probably the only thing that could have improved this moment. Maybe Hannibal feels the same. But god, Will didn't want to wait. He's still glad he didn't. He likes the attention Hannibal pays, too.

He's licking into Will now, tongue sweeping everywhere before pressing in deep. Even without fingers, it's good. More than good, honestly.

Will gasps his name, reaching for his hair, and Hannibal lets him tug gently. He does it repeatedly, until Hannibal is sucking him again, humming quietly around his cock, making Will whine.

"Goddamnit, Hannibal," he mutters, "why you gotta be so good?"

He barely gets the sentence out as sensations continue to flood him. For his part, Hannibal just seems more inspired. Will holds onto him and groans, toes curling, and finally, Hannibal slips a finger into Will where he's wet and presses deep. It's exactly what he needs. He cries out again, hips rocking.

"More," he pleads softly.

Hannibal makes a helpless noise. He gives Will another finger and sucks fast. This is a rhythm that never fails to drive him to the edge.

"Hannibal-" he pants, eyes clenching shut. He can practically hear Hannibal telling him to let go.

It comes in a slow rush of sweet heat. Will lets out a final cry as he shudders through it, heels slipping on the sheets and his knuckles white in Hannibal’s hair.

Hannibal doesn't stop for a long moment, and even when he stops sucking his tongue soothes over sensitive skin. He doesn't seem to want to pull away.

"Hannibal," Will whispers, shivering. He tugs gently at his hair again. Finally, he comes up, fingers still slick against Will's ribs as he leans over him to share a slow kiss.

Will can taste himself on Hannibal's tongue. It's hard to let him go, but he doesn't go far when Will finally does, just sags down against him with a sigh and lets Will stroke his hair, half in apology.

"This was nice," Will murmurs.

"Nice," Hannibal echoes with a sigh.

"Fuckin' hot," Will corrects himself.

Hannibal hums. "Quite."

They both snicker a little. It's pure satisfaction.

"This bed isn't as good as our bed," Will observes sleepily.

"Well, I only had to buy one."

"I don't know what that means."

"I'm sure I spent more money than the hotel, love."

"This hotel will take enough money off you tonight to buy a better one," Will grouses. "Wait - we can't stay here, what about the dogs?"

"We can go home anytime you like, love."

"You bought this room though-"

"And we have used it well." Hannibal seems unruffled. "I can call and tell them we've already checked out in the morning."

The absolute daring of it strikes Will as suddenly hilarious. "God, I can't believe this is how people live. How we live."

"We live together, and without regrets."

"I certainly don't regret us living together." Will bites his lip. "Can you believe we're getting married in four weeks?"

"You mean an eternity?"

"It feels like it's been a really long time," Will agrees, "comparatively, it's an eternity - to a firefly, or a snail." Then he laughs. "You're still mad we didn't go to city hall the day after I asked, aren't you?"

"I'm perturbed to not already be Doctor Lecter-Graham, but not to have the opportunity to celebrate in a more official and fitting capacity."

"You are already Doctor Lecter-Graham as far as I'm concerned."

"I'd like to receive my first piece of mail as such," Hannibal muses.

"Then change your name on a mailing list or three," Will teases.

That gets him an idle pinch for his trouble. Will smacks his shoulder.

"I'll get you a subscription to Doctor's Digest."

Another pinch, to his nipple this time.

"Ouch-!" He bares his teeth, but he's laughing. "Doctor, that is not *nice*-"

"I never claimed to be nice, in fact I should think it would be obvious by now that the word does not apply to me in any aspect."

"My god, you're right." Will grins mischievously up at him.

Hannibal kisses the curve of his mouth. He can make even simple kisses last for ages. Feel like more. Will touches his hair and sighs.

"Hannibal," he mumbles.

"Will?" He nuzzles closer, kissing again.

"I thought we were leaving."

"We can leave." Will sighs. Hannibal kisses his throat. "We can do anything you like, my love."

"I liked hiding here with you," Will whispers, "pretending. I think I'm ready for our world again though."

He sees Hannibal smile. "My world is wherever you are."

Will beams at him softly. "Same. Shall we get a shower?"

"Yes, please," Hannibal replies.

They gradually disentangle, and Will goes to turn on the shower.

"You bought me suits," he recalls, almost accusatory.

"Yes," Hannibal answers.

"You don't like how I dress?" He manages not to make it sound quite as defensive as he feels; keeps it nearly casual.

"I love how you dress. I just like to provide you with... new experiences as well."

Will is aware that part of his reticence is because he feels, as ever, the creeping fear of not "passing" creeping up - of certain things not being for him. He tries to hold it down, though, and just nods at the words - after all, those worries are logically unfounded, on a number of levels.

He turns and puts his arms around Hannibal. "The sooner we get home," he whispers, "the sooner I can fuck you."

Hannibal obviously knows he's changing the subject, because he raises an eyebrow, but seems happy enough to let it drop. "Then you had better hurry up and get in."

Will obeys. He's lucky, he knows, that Hannibal usually intuits his contrary, changeable flashes correctly. Seems to love them, truth be told. He does like to be entertained, Will reminds himself. Anything Will does would fit the bill in that respect.

He nudges him at the thought. "You never seem to take anything personally. I appreciate it."

"Maybe it's the psychiatrist in me."

"Maybe." Will tugs him close under the spray and kisses him.

Even so, they're fairly well behaved between then and home. They're quiet but content in the car. Will thinks about the wedding again; about the preparation they still need to do. He'll offer more time to Hannibal, he thinks.

"Where are we up to with things? Anything you need help with?"

"Just preparing for the ceremony," Hannibal muses. "We got the permit. I offered a small donation to their conservancy fund as thanks. There’s a wide observation deck we can use."

"Gay weddings for conservation," Will chuckles to himself, raising his fist in a motion of solidarity.

Hannibal smiles too. He barely even rolls his eyes. Entertained by Will, just like he said.

Will grins and looks back out of the window. He's rather entertained as well.

Chapter 5

"Hannibal," Will says, leaning on the door jamb and poking his head into the kitchen. "Can you walk to the workshop for a minute?"

Glancing up at him, Hannibal nods, putting down his tablet where he'd been reading the news and following him. He comes up beside Will and idly takes his hand. They meander outside, down the porch steps to the shed, the dogs milling about.

"How's your calf muscle after our run this morning?" Hannibal asks casually. "I know you felt you'd strained it a bit."

"It's gone off a bit now, I'll take it easy though."

"Good. I can look at it later if you like."

"I haven't had a massage in a while, I guess," Will teases.

"No, I don't think you have," Hannibal smiles softly. He watches Will smile and feels a fresh surge of that novel desire for him. After all this time, it still feels new, letting Will raise their entwined hands and kiss Hannibal's knuckles before he opens the workshop door.

The other pieces in progress have been set aside in favor of a single large structure. An arbor, Hannibal sees, but not any garden variety rose arch. It's architectural, soaring. Delicately fitted together with deco style embellishments, and touches of copper and brass. For a moment, Hannibal can only look and take it in.

"For - the ceremony?"

"Yeah," Will murmurs. "And for the yard here, after."

"It's beautiful," Hannibal murmurs.

"We'll have to pick a spot where we can see it from the addition," Will says softly.

Hannibal can't take his eyes off the arch. He's not sure when Will can have even found the time, the amount of work he's put into the house. And he hasn't noticed him slipping away to spend extra time working out here. But of course, he's been distracted, hasn't he?

His heart surges. He never doubts Will, not ever, but these instances of clarity, his heart sings. He looks at his fiancé and knows his heart is in his eyes.

Will smiles. "So you like it."

"I love it, Will."

"Good." That familiar little duck of his head, shy and pleased. "Good."

His beloved - so brilliant in everything he does. Hannibal reaches out for his hand. "This alone is worth a massage, I think."

Will goes a bit pink. "I won't argue with that."

"Unfortunately, we do have an appointment this afternoon."

Will makes a disappointed noise. "I guess that's a rain check on the massage then."

"Only until this evening, love."

Will smiles, nodding. "Where are we going?"

"If you will indulge me, we have an appointment for our final fittings at the jewelry store."

"Oh, that's today? I'd totally forgotten, sorry. Have I got time to go clean up?"

"Yes, and I will finish my recipe planning while you do."

"All right, I'll be ten minutes."

Will leans up to kiss him. Hannibal cups his cheek for a moment, before letting him pull away to head upstairs. He does return to the kitchen, finishing his grocery list while he waits.

Will comes back down after a brief wait with the hair around his cheeks a little damp where he's washed up, a fresh shirt and jeans on, devastatingly plaid. The joy in Hannibal's heart spreads its warmth through his whole chest. "Shall I drive?" he asks.

"Sure." Will pulls on a jacket and his boots, directing the dogs onto their beds with a whistle. Hannibal watches Will watch their pack settle. He looks so incredibly pleased with himself. Especially when he sees the newest rescue curl up with his head on Zoe's back.

"Good dogs," he murmurs, and then he turns to Hannibal and smiles. "Fred seems happy here," he comments.

"He certainly does," Hannibal agrees, amused. Will has been charmingly attached to the young beagle ever since he picked him up from his friend Peter. Hannibal thinks sometimes it's simply *because* he's from Peter. Will's affinity for the vulnerable has never waned. Neither has Hannibal's delight in him. He has never met a more singular man. And he's Hannibal's. Or at least, he will be in a few short days.

The pleasure that thought sparks feels like coming in from the cold, as always. He follows it, and Will, out to his car.

The jewelers they've chosen is elegant and understated. Will likes it because they don't hover. They recognize Hannibal immediately, of course, and go to the back for a velvet tray.

Will had let Hannibal choose, and simply allowed the jewelers to take his measurements in his obedient, dry way. Hannibal has every expectation of a perfect fit, today, but he wants to see the rings all the same. He wants Will to see them.

"My fiancé first, please," he murmurs, sitting in a chair at the jeweler's worktable.

Will gives him a fond roll of his eyes and steps up to the table to survey the rings as the jeweler opens the box. He reaches out a gentle finger to touch the curve of one. "I like the hammered texture even more than I expected," he comments.

"You like tactile," Hannibal says simply. He watches Will pick up the smaller ring and angle it, and that's when he spots the engraving on the inside: a tiny key.

His eyes raise up to meet Hannibal's. He smiles that smile that makes Hannibal's heart pulse hard, bashful and personifying gratitude.

Hannibal smiles back, inclining his head toward the other ring. There's a matching engraving there. Will picks that one up too, tilting it. He puts them both in his palm for a moment and looks them over.

"Two keys," he murmurs, with a smile.

"Yes. I'd hoped you would approve."

"I love them." He places Hannibal's gently into his palm and slips his own onto his finger.

Hannibal in turn slides his on, pleased with the fit; the gleam. The textured band on his ring is more of a brushed finish, still an obvious pair to Will's. Will's is also a fraction thinner and lighter than Hannibal's, to make it more comfortable if he keeps it on at work. He won't when he's using woodworking equipment, of course, and Hannibal has resigned himself to that.

Now though, Will looks reluctant to take it off. Hannibal feels much the same. "How does it feel, Will?"

"Like it belongs there."

"Glad to hear it."

Will looks up. "And yours?"

"It's perfect," Hannibal smiles. He nods at the jeweler. "Thank you."

"Shall I pack them up for you, Doctor Lecter?"

"That would be perfect."

Reluctantly, he places his ring back in the tray. The jeweler polishes them and wraps them pristinely. Will watches with surprising absorption.

Though he'd dearly love to know what he's thinking, Hannibal lets him be, taking the bag with a gracious murmur of thanks and then ushering Will out the door. He hands him the bag when they get into the car. Will smiles down at it in his lap as they drive.

"Tell me what you're thinking," Hannibal finally says.

"I'm thinking about keys and locks," Will murmurs. "Teeth connecting with pins, fitting perfectly together."

"Beautiful, isn't it?" Hannibal murmurs back.

"It feels... like a fairytale. My whole life has felt like one, since I met you."

"Is that all right?"

Will looks at him, surprised. "You think I prefer crime dramas?"

"No, Will, I know what you like."

Will's expression softens. "Why do you think I'd mind?"

"You are a more practical person than I," Hannibal murmurs.

"I'm not sure I'm more practical than you. Maybe more cynical."

Hannibal lets a smile touch his lips. "Perhaps."

Will meets his gaze briefly. His smile is bright and warm. "Not about this. This can be a fairytale if we let it."

Hannibal rarely hears him be so blindly optimistic. He hasn't quite convinced Will to start interviewing therapists yet, but he certainly seems to be calmer at the minute. It's a conversation they can have in time. For now, Hannibal is happy to make him feel secure. He'd give him anything in his power. He knows Will is trying to do the same.

Back at home, Hannibal tucks the ring bag away in a kitchen cabinet. Then he tends to the very serious business of greeting the dogs, all of whom have of course missed them terribly. Even Fred, the newest, comes for his fair share, though he hangs back. Though soon enough Will comes to set out their food, and they all trot along happily enough to the porch to eat, Fred too.

"What next?" he grins as he slips back inside.

Hannibal puts on a thoughtful face. "What was it we had on the agenda?"

"I don't know, was it... something about therapeutic massage?"

"Ah, yes, I suppose it was."

"How neglectful of you to forget to update your appointment book, Doctor," Will teases.

"Please allow me to restore your confidence in me."

"Please, carry on."

Rising, Hannibal moves toward Will, hands slipping to his elbows as he reels him gently closer. "Should we go upstairs, then?"

"Whatever you think is best, Doctor."

"Patient comfort is my top priority."

With a dirty little giggle, Will allows himself to be steered upstairs, Hannibal at his back, savoring his levity. His smiles are precious, and Hannibal collects precious things.

In the bedroom, he starts to carefully unbutton Will's shirt. The fabric parts easily, and Will watches with that faint smile on his face the entire time. "If you like this pattern-," Hannibal starts, and Will rolls his eyes.

"I don't need a fancy plaid shirt, Hannibal, this one is fine."

"Of course," Hannibal murmurs. He raises his eyebrows, taking it off and folding it, aware Will is watching; trying to hold back a laugh. "Do you want to remove your trousers for the massage, Mr. Graham? Because of the oil?"

"Seems sensible," Will snickers, doing a much less convincing job of roleplaying.

"You can step into the en suite if you'd like."

Will grins helplessly at him. "You took off my shirt already, *Doctor*."

"Very well." Hannibal pulls him closer by the belt buckle.

Will kisses him, because he is either incredibly friendly toward doctors, or not very good at pretending. Remembering their night at the hotel after the suit fittings, he thinks maybe he's just done pretending.

Relieving him of his trousers, Hannibal folds them and tosses them aside before leading him to their bed. He traces lovingly along the waistband of his boxers. "These can come off too."

"Yes, they can," Will smiles.

Finally, when he's bare, Hannibal gestures. "On your front, if that's comfortable."

He lays a towel down on the mattress and helps Will lie down. Even now, he has to pause and simply look at him for a moment.

"Hannibal?" Will smiles up at him over his shoulder.

"I love you," Hannibal whispers.

Will's smile softens. "I love you too. Touch me now?"

"Of course." Hannibal hums, moving to the bedside to retrieve a bottle of lotion. He pours it into his palm and warms it slightly. Then, he cups one of Will's calves. It's not the one he's favoring; he wants to work on the other first, to feel a baseline.

Will, predictably, shivers. Hannibal loves how responsive he is. He's always loved it; the way he reacts to Hannibal's very presence. His touch, even more so. He kneads gently at the muscles all the way up the back of Will's leg.

"How's that?" he murmurs.

"You know how it is," Will returns.

"Do I?"

"I know you do."

"I still like to check in."

"Appreciated," Will murmurs. "It's wonderful, please keep going."

Hannibal nods, moving up smoothly, applying more oil whenever it feels in danger of dragging. Eventually he does move to the sore calf. He presses his thumbs into the muscle, feeling the knot there. It's not bad, though - Will actually followed through on resting it for once - and he's able to soothe it in a matter of minutes, though Will's several deep groans tempt him to draw it out. They're soft, lazy, like he barely knows he's making sound. His eyes closed, lashes dark against his cheeks and curls soft against his forehead, he looks so peaceful.

Hannibal moves on to his thighs, feeling Will relax and tense in little increments when Hannibal's fingers slide close to his inner thigh is its own pleasure. His relaxation is already a reward. Instead of teasing, though, Hannibal simply smooths his hands firmly up Will's body, over his cheeks and up to his back: there's time for that sort of thing when he's done what he set out to do. And that is to leave Will absolutely boneless. He's certainly getting there. It makes Hannibal smile to himself.

He focuses on Will's shoulders for a minute, listening to his little sighs. They make him pause, and lean down to kiss between his shoulder blades.

"Love you," Will murmurs.

"I love you so much, Will." He sees Will smile. "How do you feel?"

"I feel good," Will slurs, a hazy laugh at the end of his voice.

He doesn't even get like this when he drinks. Hannibal has a rare moment of wondering just how far Will would let him push, like this. He can't say the idea doesn't hold some fascination. With curiosity burning him, Hannibal leans down, kissing behind Will's ear. If he

asked him, he thinks Will would say yes. At least, he thinks he would. They have so much time to explore.

With a few little nips to his shoulder, Hannibal presses his thumbs in firmly under the blades for a moment, and then gently drags his nails down. The ragged noise Will makes in response is gratifying. His hips lift a little. Hannibal makes a soft sound of his own, the wordless voice of his own yearning.

"Do that again," Will rumbles.

Hannibal traces another vertical line, slightly harder pressure this time. Again, Will shivers.

"Will," Hannibal praises. He likes the pink lines that have raised in the wake of his ministrations. They look so stark against the elegant pallor of Will's back. He leans down and bites at his shoulder blade. "Can I give you something, Will?"

"Y-yes," he stutters softly.

"What do you want?"

Will keens gently, body slowly undulating. "Why don't you tell me what *you* want, Hannibal?"

"You look good with my marks on you, beloved."

Will glances at him over his shoulder, brows raising. "I feel good with your marks on me." He says it completely calmly.

"Would you like more?"

"Perhaps a few."

"Perhaps?"

"Start with one, and see what happens."

Hannibal wets his lips. "How shall I do it?"

"Bite me," Will suggests lazily. He reaches back for Hannibal's hand.

Hannibal laces their fingers, gone thoughtful. Nearly frozen by the casualness of it. Then, Will shifts, pushing up onto his elbow and patting the mattress.

"Sh'we talk about this?"

"If you like," Hannibal murmurs. He sits, still ghosting his free hand over Will's back. Will leans up to kiss him, sprawling himself against his body, one hand slowly crawling down Hannibal's stomach. He doesn't quite seem to have emerged from his fug of sensational languor. But his mind is always sharp.

"You look at me sometimes," he murmurs, "like you need me to live. Like you'd swallow me whole. Is that what this is?"

"Perhaps it is. Perhaps it seems the only way to keep you, inside myself."

"Perhaps it is. Is it weird I don't find that alarming?"

"If it is...Then it's fine to be weird," Hannibal murmurs. "After all, we have nothing forcing us to be anything other than our truest selves."

"You can be your truest self with me," Will whispers, putting a warm, calloused hand gently over Hannibal's heart. He's bare to Hannibal's clothed, unerringly trusting, just sheltered against his body. "I'll never turn you away for who you are, and what you desire."

Never is a beautiful word from his beloved's lips. In turn, Hannibal knows that he must not burden Will with choices too difficult to make - must not take acceptance as permission. Will's choices are the most precious part of all of this.

He wraps his arms around him, holding him close. He's warm and solid against his chest. "Do you know how devoted I am to you?" Hannibal whispers into his hair.

"I do know," Will murmurs. "Trust me, Hannibal. It's not one-sided."

"I know." He cups Will's cheek, thumb stroking against the bone. "I'd never turn you away either."

"So if I told you," Will whispers, "that when you look at me like that, I think of letting you, that would be okay right?"

"It would be okay," Hannibal whispers back. His heart is beating a little faster, and he knows Will can tell. He needs to process this somehow.

"All right?" Will whispers.

"I want you," Hannibal tells him softly.

"Then it's a very good job I'm naked and in bed."

"We plan well."

Will grins helplessly. "Take off your clothes."

"Very well," Hannibal replies.

With Will's eager assistance, he's bare within a minute. Will seems to be making up for all the time Hannibal had his hands on him. He settles over his lap, smoothing fingertips over his chest, letting them scratch gently through the silvering hair there. Hannibal fights the urge to close his eyes. He'd rather watch. His hands come up automatically to rest on Will's waist.

Will leans in to kiss him. "All right?"

"Perfect."

"Well yes, you are that."

Will's eyes sparkle.

"Hush*, come and kiss me."

Hannibal sinks his fingers into his curls. If he's a little rough when he pulls Will down, he doesn't seem to mind. Their mouths meet and cling. Will's hips roll down slowly. The heat of him is enticing. Hannibal sits up to touch him; to kiss the crest of his tanned shoulder.

"Bite it if you like," Will murmurs.

"Will..." Hannibal pushes his face into the warm skin.

"I gave you permission."

"I know. I know."

He breathes in the scent of his skin. Tastes with a slow pass of his tongue. He feels Will stroking the short hairs on the back of his neck. Difficult to resist opening his mouth and feeling the give of skin under his teeth. His breath rebounds damply from Will's warmth.

Will cups the nape of his neck. Hannibal slowly increases the pressure. The feel of it flushes him with heat. So does the sweet noise that Will makes. A whimper, nothing short of. It makes Hannibal bear down.

Will's fingers slide into his hair and tighten. The breath he lets out is low and rough. They stay frozen together, in a tableau of desire, pain and yearning. Then, Will's fingers tighten. "Do it."

So Hannibal bites down, until he tastes copper. Will jolts under his teeth but doesn't pull away, his hand soothing on Hannibal's back, so gentle it makes his eyes sting. After a moment, he softens his jaw, letting his lips and tongue soothe over the skin.

"Will..." his voice shakes around the word and when he tips his chin up, Will kisses him even though his teeth are surely still red. Hannibal moans into his mouth.

Will's tongue laps against his own, breaths sharp and the heat of him tangible against Hannibal's body. The kiss is messy, desperate, and when they part Will's lower lip is smeared with blood. He looks *beautiful*. Brushing a thumb against the pink skin, Hannibal swallows the knot in his throat.

"Thank you," he murmurs.

"You don't have to thank me."

"But I mean it, beloved."

"I know you mean it." Shivery, eyes bright, Will leans to peer down at the bite, sluggishly bleeding. "Is it the color?" He asks softly. "The taste? The feeling?"

"You know it's not anything as benign as that."

Will's eyes meet his, steady as a stone. "Just the desire to consume what you love?"

"Wholly and entirely," Hannibal murmurs.

"Bones and all," Will breathes back, like he's echoing some private thought he's had before.

"Lovely bones."

Will leans their foreheads together, breathing hard. "I love you, Hannibal."

"I know. I love you too."

He feels near tears. He has to close his eyes against it, and when the first drop spills, Will kisses his cheeks. "Hannibal..."

He kisses and kisses until they're all gone. It's hard to breathe in his presence, Hannibal finds, his love so overwhelming. They end up clinging to one another, both panting. Will's hips are rolling slow and certain, eyes dark. Hannibal lets him take what he wants. Lets him push him down against the headboard and reach down between them to shift him where he wants him; take him into his body with a soft cry. Hannibal just gasps out his name, and gives him what he wants. It's what he wants too, after all.

Will rides him, slow, gentle rocks of his hips. He takes Hannibal's face in his hands. "Hannibal."

"Will," Hannibal gazes up at him.

"I'd do anything for you," Will says suddenly, voice hushed with urgency. "I'd do anything you asked. I need you to know that."

"I do know that," Hannibal whispers.

"I'd kill for you," Will breathes, pulling him closer to crush their cheeks together. His words feel like silk against Hannibal's ear. "I'd die for you."

Hannibal makes a noise he knows he has no control over. He grasps Will's hair and waist, trying to eliminate the space between them.

"Will. *Will*," he pleads.

"Tell me," Will kisses him, nearly viciously.

"I'd burn the world down for you," Hannibal whispers.

"Thank you." He sounds so completely genuine. His hands grasp greedily at Hannibal's shoulders, then stroke up into his hair as he rocks and surges, breaths leaving him in great gouts.

Will is so hot and wet around him, and it's as easy as falling. Hannibal simply holds him, and moves with him, thighs quaking as Will reduces him to breath and want. Then he's only his thundering heart. Will's beating alongside, just the tangling vines of their circular systems. He comes with Will's name on his lips. And then, breathless, he finds Will's cock with his fingers and strokes.

A wild keen bursts out of him. And he's so beautiful Hannibal can't stop looking at him. Not even when the clenching of his body makes Hannibal go oversensitive and breathless.

"Hannibal-" Will breathes, the muscles in his stomach standing out with his closeness.

Hannibal keeps stroking, lips finding the join of neck and shoulder, just over the raw red bite. Will's trembles start to intensify. Hannibal feels them shake them both. Feels the moment Will floods and comes. He gasps along with him. For a moment, the world narrows only to Will. He wants to live there. Live and breathe him wholly.

He feels lips press to his brow. "Okay?" Will whispers into his skin.

"Love," he murmurs back, voice like tender little daggers.

"I'm here." Will pulls him down to nestle into the pillows. He's still panting faintly. When Hannibal touches the dip of his flank, he shivers.

He skims his hand up Will's side, to his shoulder, touching gently over the bite mark. "I should get a dressing for this."

"You won't rest until you do, I can tell," Will says gently.

"Well, I am fairly confident I'm not rabid, but I think you'll be more comfortable with it cleaned and dressed." He presses a relatively steady kiss to Will's cheek, over his beard.

"You're okay?" Will pauses him with a hand on his shoulder.

"Okay may not encompass my feelings, beloved, but in the spirit in which you ask, I am well."

"Tell me how you are, then, Hannibal?"

"Overcome by the force of my love," Hannibal murmurs.

"Is there anything you need?"

"Just you, Will. Always you."

"I'm yours entirely."

Hannibal's appreciation knows no bounds. He surges Will closer for a kiss again. A lifetime of kisses, and they've already started.

"Now I am going to get my kit, you stay here."

Will smiles lazily up at him. "I'm not going anywhere."

"Glad to hear it." Hannibal hurries. He doesn't want to be away too long.

He comes back from the bathroom with the basic first aid kit Will keeps in there. Will looks sleepy, replete, and Hannibal cleans and bandages the bite as quickly and gently as he can. Then, he cleans both of them up, and slinks into bed to take Will back into his arms. It's not yet evening, and he has a couple of virtual sessions tonight, but for now he's content to enjoy this.

Tomorrow, his family will arrive, and proceedings will start to gather speed. He truly can't wait for them to meet Will, for them to see what Will has made of him, and with him. For them to see their home, and its potential.

Most of all, he can't wait for Murasaki to see him. Mischa may love him the best, but Murasaki knows him the best. And he still aches for her to be proud of him. He's done nothing he himself is prouder of. But learn to be something other than self contained; self concerned.

His self is larger now. His self is Will as well. He had never considered himself incomplete until he met him. And soon, so soon, it will be official.

Chapter 6

Watching from the porch, Will waves as Hannibal sets off to retrieve the Lecter clan from the airport. Minus two days and counting until the wedding, and Will has elected to stay behind and make sure everything is as it should be before Hannibal's family arrives, not to mention putting the final touches on the newly finished extension, the last piece of furniture for which arrived an hour ago. He's been tasked with cleaning the shelves and stocking it with Hannibal's china, which all things considered is a big job, but one that Will can definitely handle.

He polishes the last few teacups and arranges them, and then stands back to look. It's a kitchen extension, but there's a livable feel to the space and a gleaming new table that Hannibal had imported at some insane cost a couple of weeks back, despite being engaged to a man who makes furniture for a living. Apparently only smoked glass will set off the food properly.

Will isn't sure when his life became about setting off food appropriately, whatever that means, but standing back to admire the sunlit extension, he thinks he likes it. Hannibal's taste is undeniably good, but the design doesn't overpower the house. Though Will's living room now looks dated and dismal next to the modern kitchen area, he thinks, musing on what Hannibal will do to that next. He knows it ought to be done. But - not today. With Hannibal's overhaul of the décor, the only thing that really looks out of place now is Will, and even he's done his best to spruce – he's got a pressed denim shirt waiting in their bedroom, charcoal pants – and he's even planned a beard trim.

He polishes everything up and runs the DustBuster around one more time to collect any errant dog hairs, and by the time he hears the chorus of the dogs barking outside, he's showered and dressed and primped. Thankfully. He's not up to meeting anyone's family members half-dressed. Least of all Hannibal's, all of whom look exceptionally well-bred as they get out of Hannibal's car.

Hannibal likes downplay it, but his Uncle Robert is actually a real-life Count. He emerges from the car now with Mischa opening the door for him, while Hannibal diverts around to guide his aunt by the hand, her face hidden but her hair style and clothing effortlessly elegant.

Despite his nerves, Will can't help but smile: Hannibal looks serenely euphoric. Will tries to imitate it. Thankfully, that's what he does. When he steps out onto the porch, Mischa calls out his name in gentle delight.

"Will, your house is beautiful," she tells him with feeling, offering her hand for him to kiss in a way that somehow makes him feel eager to do so instead of prickled. It's very continental; old fashioned. He senses her aunt will likely expect the same.

But Hannibal's uncle is first, the same nearly-fragile bone structure Hannibal has but somehow more delicate. He takes Will's extended hand from Mischa's, eyes exuding warmth. Will notices immediately he has heterochromatic eyes.

Will's own smile is automatic; Robert's is entirely in his eyes, just like Hannibal.

"A pleasure to make your acquaintance, Mister Graham," he tells Will softly, "you have been a well-disguised secret from us for some time now."

"Secret no more," Will replies. "Welcome to Wolf Trap, Count Lecter."

"Please, Robert is fine. This is my wife, the Lady Murasaki," he turns to her, silver hair gleaming, and waits for her to finish whatever quiet conversation she's having with Hannibal.

When Will sees her for the first time, he's bowled over by how stunning she is. She has the energy of a cemetery angel as she extends her hand to him, a soft smile at the corner of her mouth. He kisses the back and meets her dark eyes.

"Welcome to our home."

"Thank you," she says softly, "it's so peaceful here - the perfect hideaway."

"That it is," he murmurs.

He receives Hannibal next, his gaze entirely too intimate for such a gathering, at least if anyone here is half as perceptive as Will is.

"Hello, beloved. Let's go inside."

Will lets him take his elbow. Mischa takes over in collecting coats, and in Robert's case, a hat, while Will stokes the fire back to life while Hannibal glides into the kitchen. He whistles the dogs into their beds and moves to the fireplace. Neither Murasaki nor Robert comment on them, but Mischa immediately follows them to their beds and sinks down on her knees to fuss them, to Will's faint embarrassment. He knows they'll behave, at least.

"What beautiful dogs, Will," she tells him, accepting some enthusiastic, vibrating cuddles from Fred, who's manners are not quite on par with the others' yet.

"Thanks, they're rescues."

"They're so sweet." She says hello to all of them, and Will glances up to see Hannibal watching her with that indecipherable expression Will knows as fondness.

"A little refreshment before lunch, I think," Hannibal says, gesturing his aunt into a chair with great and tangible care, "can I bring you some tea?"

"Thank you," she nods elegantly.

"Coffee for me, please," Mischa says absently, gazing balefully into Winston's eyes and then laughing when he tries to lick her.

"Uncle?" Hannibal murmurs.

"Tea sounds perfect, thank you."

"I'd love to show you the house and workshop," Will says, "after tea, maybe?"

"Perfect," Murasaki answers him, some of her heavy, dark hair starting to fall from its neat style. She's entirely arresting, younger than Robert by a considerable chunk, ageing herself to match him in her clothes. She can't be much older than Hannibal, Will observes, though she has even less silver in her hair.

Mischa agrees immediately too. "I showed them your website."

"I knew there was something I'd forgotten," Will snaps his fingers, feigning dismay.

"You forget nothing," Hannibal teases gently from the kitchen door.

"I forgot that too." Will gives him a smile, nearly shy. Hannibal smirks.

"I know you've had a long flight, I hope you're not too tired," he says to the Lecters.

"I'm always tired," Robert says, in earnest, "but seldom too tired." He exchanges a look with his wife, who looks only gently concerned.

She covers his hand with her own briefly. "Let me get your medication, my love."

He pauses a moment, then nods. Murasaki rises, moving to retrieve her shoulder bag from where Hannibal has carefully placed it on the desk by the door. He comes to her now with a tea tray that bears sparkling water as well as tea and coffee; murmurs to her quietly.

She murmurs back; it sinks for Will that they're speaking Japanese. A strange little feeling needles in the pit of his stomach, and when Will tears his gaze away, Robert is watching them too. A certainty settles in the pit of Will's stomach, curious. He wonders if he ought to ask. Maybe tonight when they're alone again. But - the last thing he wants to do is embarrass Hannibal, and really, he doesn't need to ask. He can see it.

He just stays out of Hannibal's way; goes to sit with Mischa and the dogs, the two of them exchanging smiles. Will is struck again how she only looks like Hannibal in scarce moments, but her eyes are the same color. He's always thought of her as much younger than Hannibal, simply because of her energy, but she has greys at her temples too, and smile lines around her mouth.

Her eyes meet his for a moment, one eyebrow delicately raised but her face open: enquiring.

"I'm constantly confused as to what he sees in me, I barely speak English," Will obfuscates.

"That's not true," Mischa says gently. "And I don't think we choose our partners for how similar they are to us."

Will glances up at Hannibal and Murasaki again, and nods. "No, I know. Bad joke."

"Goodness knows he's fond of those," she smiles.

"He ought to be, he endures plenty of them."

"He makes plenty of them."

"It's true," Hannibal admits, setting the tray down finally on the coffee table, pouring green tea for his aunt and uncle. "Will, darling, I brought you coffee as well," he murmurs.

"Thank you." Will gets up to retrieve a cup for Mischa and himself, and then Hannibal sits down too, and for a moment Will feels like a guest at a rather surreal tea party. He's not sure how to start any conversations, but thankfully he has Hannibal.

"Will has almost single handedly knocked down and rebuilt half the house since I moved in," he says now, voice warm with laughter, "it's quite a different property than it was three months ago."

"A carpenter's own house is finished last," Will offers bashfully. "It should maybe be a proverb."

"Perhaps you had no incentive to call it a home before now," Murasaki offers in her low, calm voice.

"It was just me and the dogs for a long time."

"Charming beasts," Robert says.

Will laughs. "Good to know they are now. They're all rescues."

"You must have a soft touch for old dogs," Mischa teases, to a soft tut from Hannibal in answer.

Will exchanges a look with him. A slight smirk in response: not much could get Hannibal down at this point, Will thinks. He's exuding delight.

"So," Mischa says, with all the excited energy of a younger sister contained in a very dignified tone, "are you all ready?"

"We are," Hannibal confirms. He looks at Will again, holding an arm out until Will goes to perch shyly beside him on the couch. Just the proximity helps, as always.

"This is beautiful coffee, Hannibal."

"I bought new beans. Hawaiian this time."

"Aloha to that."

Mischa laughs. "Ditto from me."

"How is your practice, Hannibal?" Robert asks.

"It's for your clients, too," Will shrugs.

Hannibal nuzzles him. "True."

Mischa gives Will an appraising smile. It must be the nuzzling. The thought makes Will blush a bit: this whole thing is so foreign to him. Family. What a concept.

He swallows, half uncomfortable. "So - Count Lecter, Lady Lecter - you live in Paris?"

"Yes," Uncle Robert says. "For many years."

"I've never been, but I'd like to some day."

"I'd love to take you," Hannibal murmurs.

"You must come and stay with us," Murasaki puts in, sounding positively animated, "we would love to have you both."

"Perhaps in the spring," Hannibal nods.

Smiling, Will vaguely agrees, the dim realization that Hannibal is his now, permanently, for real, hitting him again. He links their hands as Hannibal and Murasaki continue to discuss Parisian must-sees. Eventually, though with palpable reluctance, Hannibal pulls away to clear up the tea tray - with Will's help - and then they conduct a brief tour of the property before lunch.

They make the workshop their first stop. Murasaki seems particularly interested in what Will is working on. While he slowly becomes more comfortable sharing with her, it's immediately apparent to whom goes the credit for the majority of Hannibal's mannerisms. She's so incredibly still. She, too, smiles with her eyes. Will sees how Hannibal, young and fresh out of trauma, would find her easy calm and beauty so worth treasuring. He really needs to ask.

Later, he thinks. Meanwhile, he shows Murasaki his stash of salvaged heartwoods with no small amount of pride.

"You and Hannibal both have a talent for fixing and building," she remarks.

"I suppose so," Will murmurs. "Though I'm quite good at breaking things, too."

She tilts her head, polite. "That's part of mending, sometimes."

"Kintsugi," Hannibal puts in. Will hadn't known he was listening.

"Gilding cracks?" Will smiles.

Hannibal touches his cheek lightly. "I suppose that makes one of us porcelain, and one of us gold."

"Do you think?"

"I have my opinions about which of us is which, of course."

"I have no doubt."

They exchange smiles, and then Hannibal diverts them toward the extension; what will eventually be their new back patio. They all admire the glass roof, and the new table as well. Will is starting to feel a little silly, but Hannibal seems perfectly content. He knows his family, Will supposes. He's starting to see the patterns too.

"Time for lunch, I think," he says brightly.

"What did you make?" Mischa says eagerly.

"A Persian herb frittata," Hannibal smiles, "with a goat cheese and pomegranate salad."

"That sounds amazing."

"I'm hopeful it will be at the very least delicious." He helps his uncle into a chair at the table while Will attends to the ladies, then hurries into the kitchen to help bring in dishes. Will pours iced tea and pretends not to notice when Murasaki gives Hannibal's hand a gentle squeeze. Luckily, he's distracted enough trying to make sure the dogs stay out of the way. A sharp whistle sends them back to their beds.

"Sorry," he says quickly.

"They're very well-trained," Murasaki murmurs.

"They're good." Will nods.

"We enjoy them," Hannibal adds.

Will glances at him, mildly surprised, and sees Mischa shielding a smile. Busted, he thinks.

They eat with a smattering of polite conversation - most of it about how excellent the food is - before Murasaki spies Hannibal's harpsichord while they're having coffee and macarons to finish.

"You still play?"

"I do." Hannibal nods.

"I would love to hear you again."

Will thinks for once Hannibal actually looks a little shy.

"Of course," he inclines his head.

Will gets up to clear plates, trying to shake his own unfounded shyness of them and of Mischa too, for all she's somewhat familiar. Briefly meeting Will's eyes, Hannibal leads his aunt and uncle back to the sitting room. Mischa stays to help with the dishes.

"He likes it when you watch him," she tells Will, nudging him toward the door. "I'll do this."

The statement takes Will completely by surprise. His face burns as he goes to do as he's told.

Truthfully, he likes the watching just as much. Hannibal isn't the only one around here with aesthetic interests. Will just isn't as - obvious about it. Nor about his frankly obscene appreciation for Hannibal's competence. Maybe he should be more obvious. Maybe later, he will.

Hannibal gives him a truly brilliant smile when he sees him slip into the living room. Leaning against the door jamb, Will folds his arms and smiles back softly. He doesn't let his eyes stray.

Hannibal, as ever, looks intimidatingly regal at the harpsichord. Will hides a smile at the memory of moving it into the house. Not quite so regal had the appreciative head been after Hannibal had watched Will and Bev's brother carry it in. Will's old piano is still languishing in the workshop. He's thinking of renovating it, but it will require more technical skill than he currently has.

Meanwhile, there's Hannibal, who has started playing. He's talented beyond Will's comprehension.

His aunt and uncle seem equally transfixed. Murasaki, Will thinks, actually looks slightly emotional. Another thing it seems that Hannibal has learned from her. He loves these glimpses at him; his past. It feeds him in a way few other things can. He's always hungry for more, though. He thinks he always will be. And there are many meals to be had of both of their pasts. He licks his lips at the thought.

He lets Hannibal's music wash over him like a wave. It's a moment of perfect stillness. Beauty like a lapping wave. Will's heart feels, as ever, cautiously full.

He's cautious by nature, but he trusts Hannibal like no one else. That in itself feels like such a gift. A true wedding gift, he thinks. He's upsettingly grateful. He lets it shine in his eyes.

When Hannibal glances up from the keys, he sees it. He doesn't falter - Will wouldn't expect him to. He's so exceptionally composed. But Will is craving some time alone with him. It’s not that the visit has been unbearable - far from it. Will is more pleased than he can say with how things are going.

Hannibal seems so happy, even more so than usual, and the expression doesn’t fade throughout the rest of the afternoon. He's still quietly glowing when he hands his aunt and uncle back into the Bentley to deliver them to their hotel.

Will hangs back once more, taking the opportunity of Hannibal absence to tidy up a little and walk the pack.

He's still standing on the new back porch watching them play when his phone rings. He answers without looking at the display.

"Hello, darling, I'm nearly home," Hannibal's voice says in his ear.

"Glad to hear it," Will smiles automatically. "I started dinner," he adds. "Thought you might want to relax a bit."

"That's very thoughtful, Mister Lecter-Graham. What are you making?"

"Étouffée," Will says mildly, "that okay?"

"That sounds perfect."

"You're perfect," Will counters, ears turning pink.

A soft laugh. "If you say so, love."

"As a matter of fact, I do." Will smiles out at the trees.

"I'll see you soon," Hannibal says softly, and they bid goodbye before he hangs up.

Will goes inside to check the stew. The dogs are so happy to be allowed to walk around at will once more. Not that they misbehave. Much. Buster is definitely up on his favorite ottoman again.

"You know Hannibal doesn't like you on there," Will tells him, like maybe he'll tattle. Buster just cocks an ear and closes his eyes again. "You see what he says, turncoat." But he's laughing as he says it.

Dinner is nearly ready when Hannibal arrives home, the dogs greeting him in a far more sedate way than they usually do Will, always sensing that Hannibal is a different kind of receptive. Will has the stew simmering in a pot, and he made more biscuits. He catches Hannibal's lips twitching when he smells them baking and returns the smile.

"No flour fights," he warns gently, "I know what you're like, Lecter."

"Lecter-Graham," he replies softly, washing his hands and moving to set the table.

"Lecter-Graham," Will agrees. He stirs the pot gently, turning the rice off to let it steam. "How're your aunt and uncle?"

"Uncle Robert will sleep very late tomorrow, I suspect. They both very much enjoyed their visit."

"I'm glad. And Mischa?"

"She is already talking about another visit in a few months."

Will thinks on it for a moment, and then hums. "Maybe I should build a suite for guests."

Hannibal tilts his head, looking interested, so Will continues, "the garage behind the shop, maybe? It might be a little loud if I was working, but it's already got electricity and water."

"You have already practically rebuilt the main house, Will."

"So why stop now?" Will grins. "This way, you can make it look like something out of an aesthetics blog and Mischa can have someplace to stay that isn't an hour away."

Hannibal puts the plates down and draws him closer. "No more remodeling until after the honeymoon, Will."

Will opens his mouth to protest, and instead just nods. "All right."

Hannibal kisses his forehead, then rests his cheek against his hair.

"Hi." Will wraps an arm around him. "I missed you," he adds.

"Am I so different when we're alone?" Hannibal asks, without offence.

"No. But I am."

"You were perfectly charming."

"I know," Will says, even though he's not sure he'd go quite that far.

"But?" Hannibal waits.

"But I'm the most me when I'm with you."

That makes Hannibal smile. "I am, as well."

"Yeah?" Will smiles softly.

"Yes," Hannibal confirms, giving him a squeeze. "My aunt had much to say about you, for all you protest me calling you charming."

"She's just like that because she's seen my heartwoods," Will quirks a slightly suggestive eyebrow and fully expects the gentle head-butt he gets in response.

"Her appreciation -"

"Doesn't come easily?" Will finishes.

"It's not always apparent," Hannibal corrects.

"I sense that it always is to you."

"Sometimes. I have mis-stepped with her before."

Will leans for another moment. "Let's eat," he says. "And talk."

"Talk." Hannibal echoes it with the barest hint of trepidation.

Will just hums and retrieves the pot of soup. "C'mon baby." He takes both rice and soup to the table and serves up, garnishing with cilantro and lime. The biscuits are tucked into a silver serving dish with a napkin. "Ah, bon appétit," Will offers, pulling out Hannibal's chair.

"Merci, mon amour," Hannibal replies.

They start to eat in relative quiet. He's sure Hannibal isn't tired, but he is clearly thoughtful. Will is occasionally afraid of thoughtful silences, but this one doesn't prick him with the same urgency as usual, and he waits.

"What would you like to talk about?" Hannibal asks after he's stopped to butter a biscuit.

"I wanted to ask something, but... I'm afraid you'll think I'm being critical."

"I promise. I won't."

Will takes a breath, because he's not sure what he's about to ask isn't cruel - but he's not saying it to torture Hannibal, but because he wants to understand him.

"Your aunt..." he starts, voice hesitant. "She's very special to you, isn't she?"

"She and my uncle came into my life at a difficult time," Hannibal replies. He sounds equally tentative.

"I know..." Will covers his hand on the tabletop, putting down his cutlery for a moment. "If you don't want to talk about this, I can change the subject."

"You want to," Hannibal replies. He turns his hand over under Will's.

"That doesn't mean we have to."

"You don't ask me for much, Will. I like to say yes whenever I can."

Gently squeezing his hand, Will sighs. "You fell in love with her, as a boy." He watches Hannibal's eyes go both soft and remote. His hand tightens fractionally on Will's.

"She... held me together, when I was in real danger of splintering. And Uncle Robert was - it took him time to adjust to his new reality as well. She needed me too."

"It was mutual, then."

Hannibal's lips twist. "I was only a young man."

"Not always. You came home from school sometimes, I imagine, as you grew up. And then medical school."

"Yes, of course," Hannibal murmurs.

"I'm not accusing you of anything," Will gentles, "but I feel like... maybe it's something I ought to be aware of. And the way you are with her... I don't want to misunderstand."

"She taught me everything I needed to know to be a gentleman and not a savage youth."

Will tilts his head. "You told me you were angry after your parents' death. PTSD frequently presents as violent outbursts at construed threats. I'm guessing something happened."

"Something happened. I was protecting her. Paris at the time was not friendly to a young foreign woman, not even a rich one."

That's all Will needs to know. He lifts Hannibal's knuckles to his lips; kisses them. "You protected her." And he knows somehow that Robert doesn't know. They've never told him.

Hannibal shrugs slightly. "I would have done more than protect her if she hadn't stopped me."

He would have. Will can see it so clearly. It wouldn't have just been for her, either. Hannibal has admitted to violent leanings before. Or perhaps, this is now the full story. "Did you want to, even after she stopped you?"

Hannibal takes a slow breath. "Yes."

"Did she know that?"

"She did." He looks down at their hands.

"Hannibal," Will says softly, to get him to look up.

He meets his gaze, but Will thinks it's a struggle for him. "Yes?"

"She rejected you," Will murmurs softly. "In the kindest possible way, because she is a compassionate and loving woman."

No answer. Hannibal looks haunted, and Will feels sorry that he raised it at all - but selfishly glad to know him. Always that. Always glad.

"Hannibal," he repeats gently, "you know she did that because she does care for you, don't you?"

"Yes," he murmurs back.

"Good." Will squeezes his hand. "What happened after?" he asks softly.

"She was afraid of me," Hannibal says, very quietly, "and for a while I found it very difficult to care what she thought. I felt slighted, like she had denied the essence of who I was. I had become all that I thought I could be."

Will sees a tremor and reaches for his other hand. "What made you decide she was right?"

"Her, and Mischa. I started seeing a therapist. I'm aware of what I am, and how to handle it."

"I know," Will soothes. "You're the strongest person I know." He stands then, because dinner can wait, and Hannibal lets him slide over his lap and face him. He obediently tilts his head up.

"Hello, Will," he cups his flanks gently.

"I can't stay away," Will tells him apologetically. "Not after that."

"I don’t want you to," Hannibal assures him, "not ever."

Will tucks his head on Hannibal's shoulder. "I'm sorry I made you tell me."

"You didn’t make me do anything." He squeezes him gently. "I knew you'd see it," he adds softly.

"I’ve always known there was... something about you. That you didn’t necessarily want me to know."

"I told you about that part of myself. I just never told you why."

"I know." Will smiles, kissing the thin skin of his throat gently. "And now I know the rest. I love you, you know."

"I love you too," Hannibal says, soft and fierce. He pulls Will closer. Nuzzles into the skin under his ear and squeezes. They stay like that until Will is certain the remains of their dinner are cold.

"We have become disrespectful toward our food," Hannibal observes.

Will laughs. "If there's one thing I learned growing up, it's how to reheat étouffée." Hannibal only makes the slightest moue of displeasure at the thought. Will's lips twitch in a smile. "Might still be just edible, if you'd rather just try to eat it now."

Hannibal sighs. "I fear it's too late for that."

"Let me heat it up." Will smiles when Hannibal just nods. He takes the plates back to the kitchen. Meanwhile, Hannibal works on his wine. That's promising.

Will heats their plates gently in the warmer drawer, knowing Hannibal will shudder if he hears the microwave. Besides, no one ever enjoyed a microwaved shrimp.

Chapter 7

Hannibal wakes up to the sound of the dogs barking downstairs, and then Will groaning beside him. Beneath it all, the trill of the phone. His, or Will's? He's not sure.

"I'll get it," Will murmurs, lurching out of bed.

Fondly watching him go, Hannibal turns into his warmth, thinking of the night before: Will's gentle coaxing over dinner, and the way he'd carefully tended to Hannibal's feelings all night thereafter. *All* night - it's no wonder Hannibal is groggy.

He smiles at the thought, letting himself doze until Will's return rouses him.

"Unregistered number called the house phone," he's musing aloud, "did you give any clients that number when you put a new line in the office? I don't want you to miss anyone."

"No, I never give out my personal number," Hannibal replies.

"Maybe one of mine then. No worries." He sits down on the edge of the bed, stroking Hannibal's thigh.

"Morning."

"Morning," Hannibal replies, covering Will's hand with his.

"Brought coffee," Will rumbles. He gestures to where he's set it on the bedside.

Hannibal stretches and pushes himself a bit more upright. They're both quiet for a moment while they sip and wake up. Will rubs Hannibal's thigh absently every now and then.

"I want to go for a run," he announces eventually.

"That might be good for us both," Hannibal replies.

"Yeah, you wanna come with?"

"Of course," Hannibal says. "It's been a while."

"For me too. We'll go gentle. The dogs will like it."

"Which ones?" Hannibal smiles.

"All of them. Zoe and Ellie might be better staying home though, don't want them to get tired."

"At least you didn't group me in with the old dogs," Hannibal replies.

"Not today." He squeezes Hannibal's thigh again. "Breakfast first. I'll make us eggs."

"As you wish, love."

Will pauses, then he raises his brows, grinning. "You want to make them, don't you?"

"I am not so controlling, am I?" Hannibal smiles faintly.

"No, you're just picky." Will kisses him.

Hannibal hums and slips his fingers into Will's hair. He's not wrong.

"But I'm also happy to do it for you," he murmurs.

Will is a perfectly adequate cook, though more restrained than Hannibal. Hannibal has a love for it. Will just has a love for him. It's a love that occupies both of them daily, but Hannibal finds himself especially fascinated by it. Like the weather, or the face of a bluff, it changes every day.

"I'll cook," Hannibal says finally, decisively, "you walk our elderly residents. I'll call mine and see what their plans are for today."

Will chuckles. "Fair enough."

He leans in to kiss Hannibal, and then pulls on some sweatpants to make himself decent while he takes the dogs.

Hannibal succeeds him down the stairs only a short while later, and kisses him goodbye, like he won't see him again in twenty minutes. He makes quick work of an omelet while he waits. Even manages some herbed tomatoes; toasts some olive bread he made yesterday morning.

On his return, windblown and pink-cheeked, Will smiles when he sees it.

"Yeah, we made the right choice," he says, hanging up the dog leashes in the utility room and coming to wash his hands.

Hannibal gives him a kiss and waits until he sits at the kitchen table to serve him.

"So. Nearly the big day. What's coming tomorrow?" Will sits down and pours them both coffee from the jug.

"Grocery shopping for the wedding dinner," Hannibal tells him. "Our coordinator is meeting me at the park on the morning of the ceremony so we can set up our makeshift altar, and the seating."

"Then you come back here to get ready, right?"

"You don't want it to be a surprise?"

"I don't need surprises, Hannibal. I just need you."

Looking down at his plate, Hannibal waits for Will to come off his snappishness for a moment before he offers, "It's our wedding day."

"I know," Will replies.

"I'd like there to be some ceremony to it," Hannibal says, as steadily as he can, "if you don't mind."

Will closes his eyes briefly, sipping his coffee. "If it's important," he murmurs.

"Why don't you want it to be?"

"It's not that I don't want - You know I'm not traditional."

"Neither am I." However, he knows he's far more so than Will.

Will is starting to poke at his breakfast, a surefire sign he's anxious.

"It's stupid," he mutters.

Hannibal won't allow himself to become upset. He thinks, though, that Will is referring to the reason behind his own reticence. "I'd like to hear it, regardless."

"Are you sure?"

Hannibal nods, and Will sets his knife and fork down, expression surly.

"I'm frightened of feeling like a bride," he mutters. He keeps his eyes down, folding his arms. Perhaps to anyone else, it would be accusatory. But this isn't a criticism of Hannibal, he knows. Just of all the things Will can't control.

Instantly, Hannibal's own defensiveness dies.

"Tell me how to help," he murmurs.

"Just - it's stupid. I'm sorry." Will pinches the bridge of his nose.

Hannibal chooses, at this moment, not to push. "Don't be. Just tell me what you need. Or...should we clean up and go for a run, Will?"

He shrugs. "Sure, if you want."

"I want whatever you do."

Another fidgeting silence, and so Hannibal reaches to cover Will's hand with his own.

"You know I don't see you like that, so who is it you're worried about? I've never shared the details of your gender identity with my family, nor would I. No one is going to be second guessing us."

"It's not about them. Just me."

"You're perfect," Hannibal says, quickly. "You're astonishing."

Will sighs and pinches his nose again.

"So - so on our. On our wedding day." He says finally, and the words bring a smile to the corner of his mouth. "I'll meet you there, if you want it to be a surprise - but just. Don't make me walk down an aisle or anything, right?"

"I'll meet you at the altar, love."

Will turns his hand beneath Hannibal's and laces their fingers. "I didn't realize this would be such a big deal, I'm sorry."

"It's all right," Hannibal assures him. He leans to kiss him. His Will is the sweetest thing, even at moments like this.

Will drags the tips of their noses together, clutching his hand.

"Never knew this table would hear so many of our confessions."

"I'm glad it does."

"Me too." Will sighs. "Thank you."

"Don't thank me, just be mine."

"I am undeniably yours."

It's a relief to hear. Even now.

Will smiles. With one last squeeze of their hands, he sets about finishing his breakfast.

They clean up and change into running clothes after they eat, Will whistling the younger dogs into line.

Hannibal never thought he'd look forward to these moments; quaint and ordinary, if not for the extraordinary man beside him: Will makes everything more brilliant.

They stretch to warm up, and then take off on their run. It's a pleasant morning, if a bit misty, and the dogs are thrilled to roam. Hannibal feels himself start to unfurl as they get further along the path, some of the tension of the last few days slipping away. Will is keeping pace easily beside him, and their eyes occasionally meet. Hannibal misses swimming, having not had the time to find a new fitness club with everything going on, but he's glad to have this.

Will seems to be moving well, no tension showing in his arms and shoulders. Perhaps, Hannibal thinks, they could go back to their island sometime soon. It would be very special, he thinks, to be there now. And relaxing, most of all.

He should ask Will. They could take Robert and Murasaki out on Will's boat this afternoon, maybe. The thought of his family seeing Will in his element brings a smile to his lips.

It's still there when they arrive back at the house a while later, both sweatied and breathless.

Will toes off his shoes at the door and goes in for a pitcher of water for the dog bowls, while Hannibal leans against the porch rail to stretch. Distantly, he hears the trill of the phone again, but the answering machine picks it up.

A moment later, Will appears in the doorway.

Hannibal smiles at him, and then stops at the expression on his face.

"What's wrong, Will?" he asks softly.

Will doesn't just look upset, he looks livid.

"Why is Jack Crawford calling our house, Hannibal?"

"You know Jack Crawford?" Hannibal asks.

"I used to work for Jack Crawford. You said you didn't give anyone our number."

"I *didn't*, Will. No one from work."

"So how is he calling here, asking for you? He's on our goddamn answering machine-" He folds his arms across his chest. "And what do you mean, from *work*? You work with *him*?"

Hannibal pauses, and Will reads it; throws his hands up in a gesture of betrayal.

"I talked about it, and you never mentioned it. What is it, psych profiles?"

"That's what he wants, yes. He's been leaving messages on my cell phone. I haven't answered them."

"So why are you saying *from* work? What does that mean?"

"I've been taking referrals from a fellow psychiatrist, who suggested consulting for Langley would help make up for my lost clients, after the move."

"Why didn't you tell me?"

"I wasn't sure if I cared to," Hannibal says.

Will's jaw sets forward, and Hannibal knows he isn't convinced. Unfortunately, Will being unconvinced is seldom unfounded.

"You were thinking of taking Crawford up on it," he deciphers, "but you wanted to wait until you had new offices so I wouldn't find out until you decided."

"Will -" Hannibal starts, stepping up onto the porch. When he draws level with him, he sees the flinty quality to Will's gaze is fear.

"If you go there, and you look at what he shows you, you won't be able to leave it behind."

"You and I, Will - we are -"

"We are *dangerous* in that world, Hannibal. You and I can't go beyond that curtain. You know we can't."

Hannibal breathes in, carefully. "You don't think I could preserve myself."

"You don't either, or you'd have told me already."

Again, it's true. Hannibal swallows his protests; the urge to manipulate this into Will being unreasonable. That in itself is evidence enough he's correct. Will would smell it a mile off.

"I do not want Jack calling us," Will continues, voice poisonously even. "Or, god forbid, showing up at my door."

Will has never laid down an ultimatum before. It's never been necessary. A strange hurricane of emotion strangles Hannibal for a moment, blank-eyed fury among the rest. He knows Will sees it. Will sees everything quite clearly.

“Jack Crawford is a good man, asking me to do good work.”

“He’s a good man, yes. A man I respect. But he’s not a man who knows when to stop, Hannibal. And neither are you. Neither am I. It would be toxic for us.”

“Will…” Hannibal tries to stifle his defensiveness. Still, Will doesn't waver.

"Tell him no," he whispers. "Or I will."

Then, he turns and goes back inside; upstairs, where Hannibal hears the shower slam on.

Hannibal gives in to the urge to close his eyes and lean against the side of the house. The feeling of being chastised burns him. He's entirely within his rights to work with the FBI, he *knows* this. And he knows the boundaries of his self control - knows that if he chose to maintain them, he *could*, unquestionably. Will doesn't doubt that, he's certain, which means it's Hannibal's desire to maintain it that is in question.

"My love," he murmurs.

Swallowing down his many warring instincts, he pads upstairs to the bathroom.

"Will," he calls softly.

"Yeah." He sounds upset.

"May I come in?"

"Yeah."

He's in the shower when Hannibal peers round the door, the water pulling his curls straight.

"We ought to finish this conversation." A shrug at that. "I understand why you're angry."

"I know you do."

Hannibal takes a deep breath. The room smells like steam and his own shampoo. "I owe you an apology."

"No, you don't."

"Yes, I do. Will -"

Will turns off the water and opens the shower door, just standing, dripping and expectant. His arm raised, stance nonchalant. Hannibal can't help but simply admire the gall of him, sometimes. It's boundless. He's so brave.

"Go on then," Will murmurs.

Hannibal waits until their eyes catch. "Will, I am truly sorry. It was an arrogant choice, to allow things to go on as long as they did."

"It's not that." Will sighs. "You lied to me. You've never done that before."

"Lies of omission -"

"Still lies."

"I know," Hannibal murmurs. He steps their bodies together, Will's printing wet shapes onto his clothes. "I was... curious."

He's gratified when Will doesn't move away.

"Was it worth it?" he asks.

Hannibal thinks about it carefully. "No," he answers finally.

Will raises his chin. "Maybe you'd think differently if you'd gotten a glimpse behind the curtain, huh?"

"Do you think I would?"

"I think... you'd certainly think you had everything under control, until you didn't. I think you'd think I was being overcautious. Think a part of you probably does now. But a bigger part of you thinks I'm right." His voice is still cold, steely with his ultimatum.

Hannibal bows his chin, looking at Will from under his lashes. "I trust you far more than I trust myself, that I know to be true."

He feels Will's breath rise and fall. "Hannibal."

"Will." He cups his cheek. "I will do as you ask."

"Will you be resentful about it?"

"Would I be the person I am if I let myself be guided by resentment?" Hannibal asks in turn.

"What kind of person would you be if you were guided purely by curiosity?" Will fires back.

"Not who I am," Hannibal admits. He nudges their noses, coaxing Will in closer. Once again, Will allows it; accepts a kiss, and softens.

"I know who you are," Will murmurs. "You're mine."

"Yes," Hannibal whispers back. "I'm yours."

Will lets it hang between them for a moment, then murmurs, "Show me."

"Tell me how."

Will pushes him firmly to his knees.

That makes Hannibal smile: not so big an ask.

"Am I forgiven?" he whispers.

"Of course you are."

It hadn't been quite so clear, to Hannibal. Will himself is more slippery than he'd ever have Hannibal believe. He's slowly worked every truth out of Hannibal, and without even giving the appearance of *trying*, but Hannibal is certain nothing he says is an accident. He closes his eyes and leans his forehead against Will's hip.

"Hannibal," Will whispers.

"I am here." Hannibal noses between his hips, raising his hands to cradle the bones. "The king Eurytheus sent Heracles to Hades as his final trial, to capture the hound Cerberus. He never imagined such a task to be possible, but it was." He kisses again, voice shaky. "Never have I imagined I could be moved by anyone the way you move me, Will."

"I am this mythic hero?" Will murmurs.

"And I the hound you have brought to heel," Hannibal replies softly.

"If there's one thing I know, it's hounds," Will murmurs, stroking through his hair, "some can never be brought to heel."

Hannibal lifts his face. "But I am yours."

"You're mine. I'm yours." Will smiles shakily. "You should go call your folks."

"You're sending me away?"

"I'm sending you to call your Aunt and Uncle, to see if I can write the day off to positively reinforcing your behavior, or whether there's other things to attend to first." The smile that curves Will's mouth is more than a little cruel.

Hannibal loves him like flesh loves a knife.

"I'll go," he murmurs, kissing him one more time.

He goes down to the kitchen, picking up his phone as he goes, but his first call isn't to Mischa.

"Doctor Lecter," Jack Crawford booms into the tiny speaker.

"Good morning, Agent Crawford. I was returning your call, I assume you are wondering if I've had time to consider your offer."

"Of course I'm wondering," Jack replies. "These cases are often the difference between life and death, Doctor."

Hannibal wets his lips. He sees instantly how this kind of language would have influenced Will, and it riles him.

"Maybe so, but they will continue to cope without me."

"So you're saying no, then," Jack says coldly.

"I am. And I am requesting you not to call again. On this number or at my home." He listens to the surprised silence, and edges into it again. "Good day, Agent Crawford."

"Good day," Jack answers automatically.

Hannibal hangs up, and then dials Mischa.

When he's finished, he returns to Will where he's finishing up with his ablutions. He's freshly trimmed his beard and is using the beard oil that Hannibal bought him, and in nothing but his towel he looks nothing short of Apollonian, curls gleaming in the sunlight that filters through the narrow bathroom window.

Hannibal leans against the bathroom door, watching him with a deep feeling of satisfaction rising in the pit of his stomach.

"Mischa is taking my aunt and uncle to the Walters Art Museum," Hannibal tells him, meeting his eyes in the mirror. "They'll be in Baltimore all day, and likely rest after they return."

"Great. You need a shower," Will says, washing his hands.

"Yes," Hannibal replies. "I do."

Will turns the water on, and then kisses his cheek as he slides past him. "Enjoy."

He doesn't ask if Hannibal called Jack Crawford. He won't.

Satisfied, Hannibal showers, shaves, and then tucks his towel around his waist and follows the scent of Will's shower gel to their room. He's feeling more like himself now, even more so when he finds Will in the bedroom. More to the point, on the bed, and waiting, wearing his harness. The message is unmistakable; he doesn't need to say a word. Even so, he gives Hannibal one of his most devastating grins.

"You just leave that towel there, c'mere and pick a toy."

"Will," Hannibal sighs with delight. He has to come climb over his lap first and kiss him.

Will allows it, threading his fingers through the back of Hannibal's damp hair.

"Hello beautiful." Hannibal smiles down at him, gentle and open.

"Hello, darlin'," Will purrs, smoothing a hand down his back. "I've been waiting for you."

"Did I keep you waiting too long?"

"Not at all." His hand goes to the open box next to him, taps gently.

Hannibal selects his preferred toy – not too long but certainly ample, thick and smooth - and a condom with forced nonchalance. He watches Will smile.

"Go on." They get the toy dressed and in place between them, and then Will shifts upright to kiss him. "Where do you wanna be?"

Hannibal smiles and pushes himself off the bed. "Anywhere you put me."

Will considers it at length, then he slides to the edge of the bed and beckons Hannibal close.

"C'mere, babe."

Hannibal obediently steps closer. Now it's Will who cups his hips.

"Beautiful," he croons.

Hannibal has to take a few deep breaths as he watches Will curl a hand around his cock and dip his head.

"Mano vyras," he murmurs.

"What was that?" Will glances up, his other hand cupping Hannibal's balls gently.

"My husband," Hannibal repeats obediently.

Will smiles and lets the head of Hannibal's cock slide against his lips. "Jumping the gun there by about twenty-four hours," he murmurs back.

"Forgive me my over-enthusiasm."

"Nah," Will murmurs, lips brushing his head again. He takes him in with a hum, mouth hot and soft, and Hannibal hardens even more under his ministration. His breaths stutter when Will extends his neck and presses him in deeper. He's slow and almost casual about it. Everything about him is art.

Hannibal touches the spot where his hair curls off his forehead. He has to gently hold on when Will pulls him in closer; sucks deep and slick and rapid.

"Ah, Will," he sighs.

He automatically moves into it, jaw dropping, his head falling back as he breathes deep. Will's fingers are teasing behind his balls now, both hands moving, working. He breathes hard through his nose as he takes Hannibal deeper, throat clicking. Hannibal thinks he's becoming affected as well. Subtle changes in the warmth in the air; Will's scent and breath. Hannibal inhales deeply, trying to take in as much of it as he can.

"Will," he pants softly. "Will, I want more."

He watches him ease back with a sigh and a smile on his face. His eyes are intent.

"All right," he rasps, standing up, their bodies flush. "I want you to bend over the bed, all right?"

Hannibal nods. "Yes, Will."

He cups Hannibal's jaw adoringly at that; gives him a few more long, needy kisses. Then he takes his shoulder and pushes him down.

Hannibal shifts to get comfortable, bracing his forearms against the comforter and listening to Will retrieve lube; click it open.

"You want my fingers first?"

"No," Hannibal murmurs.

Will sounds like he's had some private assumption confirmed. He sounds...pleased.

"All right."

Hannibal has to dip his head to watch through his thighs as Will slicks up the toy, smearing the excess between Hannibal's cheeks with his fingers. Hannibal pushes back to show his enthusiasm; smiles at the impatient little snatch in Will's movements when he grabs his hips and nudges him this way and that, until the head of the toy - thicker than their usual - presses against his rim, just a few seconds of teasing before Will starts to *push*.

He presses in with tiny, controlled rocks of his hips, and Hannibal's fingers tighten in the sheets, shoulders pulling closer. He breathes in and out, slowly, waiting for Will to move. He's inching in, one hand moving off Hannibal's hip to gently rub at his lower belly; pull at his flushed cock, eliciting a soft hiss. Hannibal bridges his hips back automatically; gasps as

Will slips in to the base. He gasps his name into the soft expanse of their sheets, then braces his forehead against them as Will draws out, and sharply back in.

He's not overly gentle, but Hannibal doesn't want him to be. This version of Will is delicious, ruthless and self-assured. Between his firmer thrusts, he pulses his hips slower implements another massaging squeeze of Hannibal's cock.

"Will," Hannibal hisses.

"I'm here, Doctor."

It's so much, so soon after having been in the mouth - been on his knees for Will.

"Not yet," he breathes.

Will slows his hand and leans to kiss the centre of his back. "What was that?"

"Too close."

A little, answering hum at that. Will takes his hips with both hands again instead and straightens. His thrusts grow concentrated, slower and deeper, driving and constant for a few aching minutes.

Hannibal holds himself in place for Will, but allows himself to moan. He can tell by the way Will spreads his cheeks with his thumbs that he's watching the toy disappear into Hannibal's body. It's the thought of him being *inside* is what makes the need hard to ignore once again.

"Will," he groans.

"Want more?" Will whispers.

"Harder."

As with everything Hannibal wants, Will gives it to him, until he struggles to keep from gasping aloud. Will, inside him, so hard and so perfect. Taking him over and making him feel. It's constant, the deep rocks and circling motions of his hips, Hannibal's knees nearly threatening to give out under the sensation.

Will hits every nerve ending he has, and he doesn't let up. And then his hand curls around Hannibal once more.

Hannibal breathes his name again, pushing into it.

"Ready now?" Will whispers, steadying him with his other hand.

"Yes, Will, yes," he breathes.

The movements of Will's body seem so powerful and effortless then, his hand working the head of Hannibal's cock fast as he pounds in with his hips.

Hannibal's arms tense to hold himself in place. He can feel he's slick, hot, hard. So close he's already tending against the pressure between his hips. A few more strokes like this will send him over, and now he lets Will steer him to the precipice.

"You want to come?" Will whispers.

"Please, yes," Hannibal grits.

Will snaps his hips forward again. His hand works faster, and everything descends into a delicious blur of sensation once more.

Hannibal feels himself tighten around the cock inside him, squeezing helplessly around it even as his own jerks and spills in Will's hand. Nothing could be better. He pitches forward into white-out pleasure that stretches on for endless seconds, only dimly aware as Will's free hand runs gently down the bow of his spine.

With trembling thighs, Hannibal lets his knees brace against the edge of the mattress, panting. Will's hand tightens on his hip before he pulls out.

"Gorgeous," he mutters, kissing Hannibal's back once more before he pulls away.

With his chest still heaving, Hannibal hears him padding to the bathroom; the running of the taps.

"Will," he whispers, pressing his face against the sheets. He's thrilled by him, and he aches in his absence until he feels hands on his skin again, travelling down his flank where he's sprawled on his side.

"Y'with me?" Will laughs, holding out a glass of water.

Hannibal waves it away, wrapping manacling fingers around Will's wrist instead. "Come here."

"All right." Setting it aside, Will curls down beside him, winding an arm under him.

He leans in for a soft kiss, and Hannibal sighs into it, relaxing finally. His hand settles on Will's hip to tug him close. The harness is gone, removed and left in the bathroom for wiping down, most likely. Hannibal lets his fingers wander down. He feels Will's intake of breath, and without breaking their kiss, urges his thigh up and over Hannibal's own.

"What can I give you?" Hannibal murmurs.

"Anything, God."

"Mm?" He uses his hand to encourage Will to rock. He's wet, and hard, and so enticing, and he rides Hannibal's thigh for a moment to the rhythm of his own audible breaths. Luxuriating in his trust, his pleasure, Hannibal reaches for the box again. "Will," he murmurs, digging through.

"What're you looking for?" Will smiles, rocking again, pressing close.

Hannibal smiles back and nuzzles his cheek. "Something to take care of you."

He finds a vibe with the proper curve and pushes the box aside. It’s relatively small, but tapered and ergonomic, soft black silicone.

"You want me to move?" Will murmurs.

"Not if you don't want to." Hannibal leans up on his elbow and passes Will a condom for the toy, watching him sheath it quickly and hand it back.

"You do it."

"Like I'd pass on an opportunity to get inside you." His lips lift slightly.

"What a gentleman," Will purrs.

His hips drift upward again as Hannibal guides the toy between his thighs, letting the shaft drag slick against Will for a moment. He contemplates pressing the button, but watching Will squirm to get it inside him holds his attention for a moment.

"Impatient?" he murmurs.

"No, no, I could do this all day."

Hannibal laughs and presses in; kisses away the soft moan as Will spreads his thighs wider. Hannibal seats the toy inside him slowly. Watching Will's face is its own rich pleasure, from the flicker of his lashes to the soft 'o' of his parted lips, flush from kisses. Hannibal urges him to continue riding his thigh, one hand rhythmically pressing the base of the toy. He watches Will undulate, his gasps peaking, and finally he uses his nail to flip the switch on the base.

Will's hand grabs his elbow and clamps down.

"Oh - God -"

Hannibal kisses his throat.

"Fuck," he hears Will hiss.

"Good," Hannibal murmurs in his ear.

He relishes his turn to reduce Will to trembling; the opportunity to simply hold him while he does so. He keeps the toy surging, feeling the answering groans against his skin, and the way his hips rock against his thigh, seeking even more pressure. Hannibal answers it by pressing the button again to feel the vibration ratchet up.

Will's trembles turn into a long, breathy moan.

"Hannibal," he sighs, clutching him tighter.

Hannibal seals their mouths together, wanting to feel his gasps. He works his wrist faster, keeping the toy moving. He can feel the echoes of its vibration on his own skin.

Will grips him tighter when Hannibal shifts his wrist to fuck him in earnest, his hips rock forward repeatedly, brows drawn and mouth slightly open.

"Hannibal-" it comes out as a moan. They shift subtly, Will's hips leveling with the mattress.

"Come for me," Hannibal whispers.

"Faster," Will counters.

Hannibal shifts his grip on the base. He can do faster.

And he does, watching Will arch and gasp, heels dragging against the sheets. He can't look away. Can only give him what he asks for, fucking him fast and slick with the toy and marveling at how *wet* Will is, cock flushed, belly shaking.

He leans down to mouth across his chest. Can't resist biting softly at Will's nipples, one and then the other, before moving down. He kisses down the trembling skin of his stomach. Lips down to Will's cock and softly sucks the tip as he keeps the toy moving quick and deep.

"Hannibal - holy - don't stop that -"

Will sounds half-wild, snagging a hand into Hannibal's hair and tipping onto his back, spreading his legs wider, and something about the way the toy feels driving into him makes Hannibal think he's shaking through a more intense bout of stimulation than he's used to. The thought pleases him immensely.

He makes a small noise of his own. The taste and smell and feel, it's intoxicating as always. Will is starting to tremble more fiercely, hips rocking and his breaths startling out as Hannibal fucks him quicker still. He gasps Hannibal's name, shoving his hips up.

When he starts to come, Hannibal strokes faster, and he doesn't stop even when the pulses subside, keeping Will moaning.

"Hannibal-!"

"Will," he flicks his tongue again; listens to Will's vocalizations lilting to strained again as he surges to toy in again and again. He feels his thighs tremble and buck.

"*Fuck*!" He shakes through another orgasm, this time with a little flood of wetness that runs down Hannibal's fingers and wrist.

Hannibal closes his eyes and stills his movements. "Will," he whispers.

"Yeah," Will gasps, stroking his hair slowly, dazed.

Hannibal flicks the toy off and gently removes it.

Now it's Will's turn to lie prostrate and panting as Hannibal sees to what he can of the clean-up. He makes a grab for Hannibal’s hip as he rounds the corner of the bed again, and Hannibal happily obliges him, pulling the sheets up and beckoning Will to him at the headboard.

They curl together in a tangle. Will still seems shaky, burying his face in Hannibal's shoulder for a minute, and Hannibal is all too happy to hold him.

"Will?" He whispers. "Are you all right?"

"Yes, baby," he murmurs. He gives a languid little flex. "We need to change these sheets."

"Later," Hannibal says. Plenty of time later.

Will smiles at him sleepily. "You okay?"

"I am now." Hannibal strokes his hair back out of his face.

Will sighs at the contact. "This was good. I mean not the - middle bit. But earlier. And this."

"That problem is solved," Hannibal tells him, smiling fondly. "We can have earlier and this whenever you like."

"I liked this more than the run, I gotta say."

Hannibal feels warm at the clear appreciation in his tone. "We'll have to get a bit more inventive if this is to be our only form of exercise."

"On second thought, we might not survive that."

Hannibal chuckles at the thought. "It might be worth a try."

"It just might." Will stretches to kiss his cheek. They quiet again for a moment, and then Will makes another soft noise. "Sleepy work, this morning."

"Sleep if you like. I'll stay."

"Sleep with me."

"I'll try, love."

"You're going to *think*, aren't you?"

Hannibal smiles again. "Sometimes I do that."

"Lowballing it, Doctor Lecter-Graham."

"Shh," Hannibal tells him. "Sleep. I promise I won't think very hard."

"Promise?" He grins up at Hannibal, and Hannibal returns it.

"Promise."

Will settles down at that, finally. It's impossible for Hannibal to do anything other than watch him. He does, as promised, try not to think too hard. Though he can't help but nudge Will again quickly, before he drifts off. "Will. I had one more thing to tell you about?"

"Mmm?" Will hums a question.

"As much as I know tradition irks you, you may notice we haven't shown one another our suits yet."

"I guess so," Will murmurs. He reluctantly opens his eyes to look at him, and Hannibal can't help but smile at his knowing grimace.

"I'd like our first glimpses of one another at the altar to be a surprise."

"We talked about that," Will murmurs. "So what's the plan?"

"I've booked a room at the hotel my Aunt and Uncle are staying at, for tomorrow night. Just for the night." He touches Will's cheek.

"Oh," Will murmurs.

Hannibal thinks he looks terribly unhappy at the thought of spending a night away from him, and the knowledge pleases him.

"I've taken the liberty to invite guests over for you, for dinner."

"Guests?" Considering annoyance, now.

"Beverly and Alana." Slightly mollified by that. Hannibal strokes his face again. "They wanted to."

"Hmm," is all Will says to that. “Sounds like it’ll be a weird stag night.”

"You can order a stripper if you think that will add to the experience."

"Oh yeah, you’d love that." Will snorts, then sighs, debating. "It's really important to you?"

"I have never married, and will never marry again," Hannibal murmurs.

Will sighs, still looking put out, but not unwilling.

"It's just one night, my love."

"Yeah." That still doesn't visibly comfort him, but he doesn't protest any more.

Hannibal kisses him; a little positive reinforcement of his own. Will's agreement, however reluctant, is all he could ask for.

Chapter 8

"Thank you again, Madame."

"A pleasure as always, Doctor Lecter."

Hannibal shakes Madame Varma's hand with another few pleasantries before following her assistant outside, where they carefully load the two suit carriers into the back of the Bentley. Hannibal then sends Mischa a quick message checking on their day, then starts his car and drives across town to Doctor DuMaurier's home.

It's his first session in a few weeks, and he has much to report. He won't have another until well after their wedding.

When he arrives at Dr. Du Maurier's immaculate mid-century modern home, landscapers are working in her yard. Hannibal suppresses a smile, knowing how disgruntled she will be to have been caught in a moment of less-than perfection. He makes his way to the door and knocks.

After answering, she pauses in the doorway, looking cool and remote in a silk blouse and pencil skirt. Hannibal sees the slight tightening around her eyes and knows he was correct.

"Good morning, Hannibal," she greets, "please come in."

"Thank you," he inclines his head politely and steps into her office space when she gestures him in. They take their respective seats, and Bedelia crosses her legs neatly.

"What would you like to discuss today?"

"The FBI agent called again, to our home," Hannibal murmurs. "Will found out."

A calmly raised eyebrow at that, as good as an "I told you so".

"I can infer from your demeanor that he was displeased."

"He was... angrier than I had ever seen him."

"Was?"

"We are recovered, for the most part."

"You made your decision, then."

"Will made it," Hannibal admits, "though I believe he was right."

"You allowed him the power of the decision."

"I did. I even relished it."

"Yes, I imagine you would have. Does he know?"

Hannibal debates, and then tips his chin down. "There's very little Will doesn't know."

Bedelia, as ever, sees the meaning through the words. "What else has he seen?"

For the first time in a long time, Hannibal hesitates to tell her. But, he reminds himself, this is why he has a therapist.

"My aunt and uncle are here currently, staying over the course of the wedding."

"Family stress is common before big events," she murmurs when he doesn't continue.

"There hasn't been any. That isn't the issue."

"I see. Do you not wish to discuss it, Hannibal?"

"He spent the better part of a day with me and my aunt, and within minutes I think he had sussed the nature of our relationship."

"Are you surprised by this?"

"I am surprised because I thought my feelings had... changed."

"Changed how?"

Hannibal thinks, unusually faltering. "In nature, if not in strength."

"But they have not?"

"Only in strength, as it transpires."

"And how do you feel about that?"

Hannibal debates again. "He has been ceaselessly delicate with me about it."

"Do you feel the need for a confrontation?"

"That's not exactly the nature of the delicacy. It's... it's not jealousy. It's not incredulity or concern. He... seems to savor every aspect of me. Perhaps he needs to be fascinated by something and I fit those parameters."

Bedelia takes a moment, recrosses her legs. "Is it bad, to be fascinated by your partner?"

"It's not bad. I'm fascinated in turn."

"Do you feel his fascination precludes something more -" she trails off delicately. Hannibal waits, raising his eyebrows. "Meaningful?" she eventually finishes when he doesn't.

"No," Hannibal shakes his head. "I don't think Will is capable of meaningless relationships, it's one of his biggest struggles. His empathy means he engages entirely. I think he finds it difficult to shrug me off sometimes, my thoughts, my motives. I think perhaps that is what..."

Bedelia tilts her head, a blonde ringlet shifting and dropping over her collar. "What you're afraid of?" she prompts delicately.

Hannibal looks down at his hands. "Strange, to feel unsure of myself."

"You are human, Hannibal. As much as you may dislike that."

That makes him thoughtful again. "I never thought I was capable of feeling like this about someone."

He thinks of Will and the careful, respectful way he spoke to Robert, Murasaki and Mischa. He's always so very careful with the things Hannibal loves.

"What is your main concern at this moment, Hannibal?"

"I have never before been visited by the notion that I might not deserve something," Hannibal muses, "that I might not be... good enough for someone else. I considered myself complete; career, comfort, self-control, every pleasure I could imagine for myself."

"And what does that notion do to you?"

"It makes me feel grateful."

"Then perhaps that is what you wish to express to him?"

"Perhaps it is."

"Will that quiet your hesitations?"

"I want it to."

"Then you need to make a decision, Hannibal," Bedelia leans back in her chair, posture poised but still taut, "on whether to let him accept you as you are, or whether to keep pushing the boundaries."

"Yes," Hannibal murmurs. "Yes, I do."

Bedelia watches him, interest clear. Before he'd met Will, he's certain he knows what he'd have chosen.

"I think he would let me keep pushing," he admits, remembering the bite, "he always has so far."

Bedelia leans back slightly in her chair. "I'll be interested to hear your decision."

"So will I."

Hannibal feels inclined to change the subject after that, to matters related to his practice. He's no doubt that Bedelia knows his mind is still turning. She knows him very well, after all these years. Though not like Will. No one could ever be.

As ever, Hannibal feels impatient for the time he's away from Will to shrink. But he respects Bedelia's time, so he hides it. Finally, the session draws to a close.

He stands. Bedelia walks with him to her door. "My congratulations on your marriage," she murmurs.

"Thank you," he says, genuinely, "and for your time."

"You're welcome. Be well, Hannibal."

He heads out, down the paved path, toward his car, feeling strangely disrupted, like overturned earth. Tender and dark and full of potential. The shrouding warmth from which new life begins. He smiles as he lets himself back into his car.

The thought of seeing Will soon buoys him. He calls him to let him know he's on the way home.

"Great, I miss you," Will tells him, and Hannibal is struck anew with that gratitude.

"I've only been gone a couple of hours."

"Still too long for me, tonight is gonna be hell."

"I suppose I shall have to make sure you know how cherished you are before I leave then," Hannibal murmurs. "I'll see you soon, Will."

"Drive safe, darlin'."

Hannibal drives safely; but he drives fast. He can't wait to be there.

At home, Will looks gold once more in the autumn sunshine, out on the deck with the dogs. He's just sitting, for once, feet up on the railing, idly playing with one of Fred's ears. His other hand is on top of Winston's crown, Buster on his lap. Hannibal has to smile.

"You appear to be quite occupied," he tells his fiancé, leaning down for a kiss.

"They sense my impending pining."

"I think they sense the chance for attention," Hannibal corrects. "So do I. Come upstairs and help me with these bags?"

"All right." Will ushers Buster off him gently. Hannibal is somehow not surprised when the three of them all follow them upstairs.

Max and Chloe raise their heads from their baskets, and Hannibal gives them a scratch behind their ears before following Will. They're the older members of the pack, and never keen to move. Fred, the beagle, has been glued to Will - and subsequently, Winston - since he arrived. He suspects, from the amount of hair, that they both sleep at the top of the stairs. He's considering buying them an extra bed. Or else a new vacuum.

Will sits on the edge of the bed and watches Hannibal hang up the suit bags, carefully lifting a small case from the floor of the closet.

"You're already packed, aren't you?" he asks.

"I'm afraid so."

"Somehow, I'm not surprised. So what are we doing up here?"

"I have no idea what two people might get up to alone in their bedroom."

Hannibal raises an eyebrow, and Will laughs. "Okay, I deserved that. I mean - did you just - want company or -"

"What's the question you're trying to ask, Will?"

"Did you want to talk? Or just - be with me."

"It could be both, if you like."

"Yeah," Will murmurs. "Come here."

Hannibal takes off his suit jacket and goes, settling onto the bed, back against the headboard, and holding his arms out for Will.

"You're nervous?" he intuits.

"Wish you weren't leaving," Will tells him.

"It's only for tonight, my love." He kisses his temple. "Are you upset with me?"

"No," Will says, honestly. "I just... I don't like being without you."

"Never again, if I can help it," Hannibal promises.

Will sighs and curls closer into his side, relaxing when Hannibal strokes his curls.

"I'm sorry," he says quietly. "I know this is important to you, and I know I'll enjoy having Bev and Alana over."

"You don't have to be sorry." Hannibal kisses his forehead. "It's only natural we have differences. I appreciate your support."

"Well, I appreciate you," Will tells him. Also the dinner you made us. I, uh. Peeked at that."

"Does that mean you tasted it?"

"No! I didn't want to mess it up."

Hannibal chuckles. "I trust you."

Will laughs too. "Alana, at least, would notice."

"I believe you're right."

Will rolls so they're chest to chest, noses pressed together. "Aren't I usually?"

"Nearly always," Hannibal confirms, smiling when Will rubs the tips of their noses together. It's only the truth.

Will sighs, arching against him, not angling for anything other than contact. Hannibal has a special fondness for him when he's like this: letting himself touch for the sake of it. Will is goal-oriented, and usually doesn't allow himself much aimless, luxuriating affection. He thinks he'll encourage them to stay just like this, at least until Will's guests arrive.

He keeps stroking his hair, smiling softly. "Sweet boy."

"Mm. Yeah."

"I don't have to leave for a few hours," Hannibal hums into his curls, inhaling his scent.

"Good," Will says. "You can kiss me a few hundred times until then."

"A few hundred? Sounds like a challenge."

"I'll be counting."

"Aloud?"

"What do you think?" Will laughs softly.

"I'll hold you to it." Hannibal leans in to kiss him.

"Oh, I know you will, Doctor." And then he adds, "One."

Hannibal leans in to start. "Two," he whispers, as Will slides a hand up into his hair.

"Three," Will whispers against his cheek.

Hannibal settles in: it's going to be a long afternoon. He couldn't imagine a better one.

*

Will wakes up far too early the next morning, despite splitting a bottle of wine - and perhaps a few whiskies - with Alana and Beverly last night. It had been a good one, mostly spent with Beverly drunkenly trying to get all the dogs to lie on her at once while Will and Alana took

photos to incriminate her with later. They'd watched movies, and eaten the dinner Hannibal had left them like grownups, and then later eaten ice cream out of a tub with three spoons, sat on the sofa watching crime dramas and pointing out the procedural errors.

Now, Will tries to go back to sleep for a while before giving up and going downstairs to curl on the sofa with the dogs, watching the sky turn pink through the glass walls of the extension, the trees gently swaying. It's going to be a beautiful day, brisk and bright.

He's pleased he agreed to a midday wedding, as well. He hadn't realized how much he'd miss Hannibal, even just for these few hours.

Movement on the stairs rouses him, and it's Beverley, wearing a guest robe and examining the sleeves of it with amusement.

"Your fiancé..." she says dryly, "do you think he'll ever open a hotel? There were chocolates on the pillow on the spare room last night, did you know that?"

Will smiles. "No, or I would have stolen one for myself."

"I bet there's a bag of them somewhere. Permission to rummage?"

"I'm sure there's actual breakfast food. I just haven't looked yet." She still looks expectant, so he laughs. "Permission granted. Help yourself."

"I'll make coffee too," she says in reply.

"Okay. Is Alana in the shower?"

She nods. "There was a basket of shower stuff too. Seriously, are you opening a B&B or something?"

"God, I hope not."

He gets up to open the back door onto their back porch, the dogs streaming out behind him. He sweeps leaves off the chairs on the back and then goes into the kitchen to help Beverley rustle up some breakfast. Hannibal has made sausage, so Will cooks them up with some eggs.

"Did you ever think you'd see this day?" He asks Beverly mildly.

"I have to admit, I didn't think it was likely."

He laughs helplessly. "Well, me neither."

Beverly pours three mugs of coffee, adjusting two of them for her and Alana. Will smiles at the sight.

"Things are good for you?" They hadn't really talked much about it last night, though it was pretty obvious from the way they curled together.

"What are you, protective older brother now?"

"Is that bad?" He wrinkles his nose.

"No. I always wanted an older brother, actually." She smiles, passing him his coffee. She comes to peek into the egg pan. "Should I call Alana?"

"No need." Alana announces herself as she enters the kitchen, dressed but only in casual wear, her hair still slightly damp. "Your new shower is so much better than the old one, Will."

"Almost anything would be," he laughs, blushing a bit even so: weird to remember that Alana has been here before, in what feels like another life, in a distinctly different capacity.

She comes to kiss Bev good morning, and Will feels good about the change. He feels good about everything today, except for the temporary absence of his fiancé.

"How you doing then, champ?" Bev asks, accepting two plates of breakfast to take to the outside table.

"Good," Will says, "though I'm anxious to get to the park."

"You've got plenty of time," Alana chimes in gently, sitting down beside him and plopping her feet in Bev's lap while she eats, her yoga pants riding up on her ankle.

"Yes, we have both a timetable and instructions to drive you," Bev teases.

"Ha, yeah, because I'm so flighty and disorganized."

"I think we're just earning our breakfast," Alana grins.

"I think I'll earn mine by putting gel in my hair."

"*I think* Hannibal wants your hair exactly how it always is," Alana says.

"Ha," Will echoes again. "Well, that's what he's going to get."

"Can't imagine you'd have had time to go buy hair gel if you'd gotten married when you originally planned." Alana gets up with a "be right back" gesture and nips into the kitchen.

"I knew I shouldn't have let you talk us out of it." Will just sips his coffee and waits.

Bev's smile is knowing, and when Alana returns she has three glasses, a bottle of champagne, and peach purée. "Hannibal said I had to make sure you had a drink."

"I can't just put some whiskey in my coffee?"

"Not that much of a drink." She starts to squeak the bottle open carefully.

Will bites back a smile.

The cork flies off into the grass, and Buster goes racing after it. Beverly laughs and relieves her of the bottle. "I'll do the fizz, you do the peach stuff."

"I'm better at the peach stuff," Alana agrees, starting to portion what looks like freshly blended purée into each glass. Will feels a startling surge of longing for Hannibal: of course he puréed peaches yesterday before he left. Of course he did that, and made sausages, and dressed the guest bed, and more besides. And he'll come back here after the wedding, and set the table, cook their dinner, and mix their drinks. And Will just wants to see him.

"Will?" Alana touches his shoulder.

"I miss him," he mumbles.

"Not long now," Beverly promises. Their glasses filled, she raises hers in a toast. "To inheriting a title!"

Will splutters before he can take a sip.

"Bev!" He laughs helplessly.

"Yeah, yeah, you know I couldn't resist. Fine, to Will and Harold and their future happiness."

"Hannibal," Will corrects needlessly.

"That's what I said, Hans."

Will and Alana exchange a glance. "Please don't let her do that at the wedding."

"She's been warned," Alana says with a glance at her partner.

Bev just grins and sips her Bellini. They drink and eat with content chatter amongst themselves, and then Will excuses himself to go walk the dogs and then take his turn to shower up.

His suit is hanging in its bag in the bedroom closet, waiting for him, his shoes shined underneath. He puts on a t-shirt and boxers while he styles his hair, not wanting to ruffle it too soon.

Shortly, Alana and Beverly join him, Bev's hair still in rollers.

He gives them both a skeptical look. "It's not time to get dressed, is it?"

"Soon," Alana smiles.

He sighs. "Does my hair look all right."

"You look *hot*," Bev chimes in.

"I'm not even dressed yet."

"Imagine how you'll look when you are," Alana smiles at him, handing him another glass.

"Hope there's champagne left for our dinner," he jokes.

"Please, you think he doesn't have a crate of magnums?"

They both snicker, and Will rolls his eyes.

He's at least noticed those arriving, but Hannibal has been very self-sufficient with most of the planning. Will thinks he wanted it that way; he hadn't asked Will for help. Only about things Will had asked to be involved in. Which admittedly wasn't much - he would have gotten married in the back garden if Hannibal had wanted. Or in the county courthouse. In a *lay-by*, goddamnit. And Hannibal would have made that special, too. Smiling, he sips some more of his drink. Even to his limited palate, it's some of the best he's had.

His friends wander in and out of his room, slowly getting dressed, doing their hair and makeup. Will takes it as a cue to unbag his suit.

It's pale grey, the shirt creamy white, with a matching bow tie. Will eyes it for a moment, and then takes down the shirt and slacks. He'll keep the waistcoat and blazer in the bag for now.

He dresses, then puts on his socks and belt, then fights with his cufflinks until Alana takes pity.

"Let me." She delicately tucks his cuffs back, glancing up at him from under her lashes after a minute. "How you holding up?"

"I want to see him," he says quietly.

"Two hours. We'll leave in twenty." She promises.

Will almost laughs. He's sure he remembers the days when he *wanted* to be alone. She looks like she's thinking of something similar.

"We'll get you there. And he'll get you home."

"Sounds like a plan." He kisses her cheek. "I gotta sort the dogs, I'll meet you by the car."

She takes his coat and waistcoat from him and clicks down the stairs. Beverly soon follows after her, complaining softly about wearing pantyhose. Will is abruptly glad he's refinished all the floors in the house, or she'd snag them sooner or later, walking around shoeless like she is.

Will smiles to himself as he herds the dogs in from their roaming and sets out food for them; checks the water. They'll be entirely fine for a few hours, he knows. And it really will only be a few.

Their honeymoon will be another story. Will still isn't sure exactly what to do about that.

Thinking about it, he puts on his shoes, buffing them a final time and using a lint roller on his trousers, just in case.

"How do you guys feel about house-sitting?" He asks mildly, as he wanders to the car.

"Will we have to put our own chocolates on our pillows?" Beverly asks darkly.

"I will ask Hannibal to leave you a mountain full."

"Sold," Bev laughs.

"She's cheap," Alana says idly.

"And that's why we like her?"

"I'm expensive where it counts," Beverly says confidently, getting into the drivers' side of Alana's car.

Will makes sure his jacket is hanging securely in the back seat and climbs in after.

"Groom gets shotgun," Bev grins, "and to pick the soundtrack."

Alana holds the front door open, smiling. Finally she's in the back, and they're on their way.

"I remembered the rings, right?" he asks after a few minutes.

"No, I've got them." Alana laughs. "We talked about it last night at dinner. I put them right into my purse."

"God, I drank too much."

"You're allowed, Will." Alana reaches forward and squeezes his shoulder gently.

He smiles helplessly; covers her hand with his own.

"Now all I have to worry about is falling in the lake or spilling down my suit in front of Hannibal's pristine relatives."

"I can't speak for the second," Beverly puts in, "but you would never fall in the lake."

"I hope not."

"Beverly would fall in the lake *and* mess up her outfit," Alana teases. "She can be your distraction."

"I owe you one," Will tells Bev.

She just laughs. "Just make sure I don't drown."

"I can handle that."

They quiet a little then, and Will looks out the window as they drive, mind racing ahead to find Hannibal. He's tense, but - in a good way. He thinks he aches for the absence of Hannibal. Knowing it won't be long until they see each other eases it somewhat.

Chapter 9

Even upon arriving at the lakeside, Will has to wait to see his groom. Despite their venue being small, there only being the lakeside restaurant to use for preparation - Will is starting to think Hannibal has hired the entire premises - both Hannibal and Murasaki are conspicuously well-concealed from view.

Mischa is waiting with Robert Lecter in the dining room, both of them brightening at the sight of Will.

"Will," Mischa enthuses, "you look wonderful. And these are your friends?"

"Ah, yes, this is Alana and Beverly. Guys, this is Hannibal's sister Mischa, and his Uncle Robert." He watches everyone shake hands with somewhat bemused delight.

"A pleasure to meet some of Hannibal's friends," Mischa says, "I wasn't ever convinced he meant it when he said he had some."

"He inherited me," Bev says cheerfully. "But he and Will introduced the two of us, so it's all working out."

"Everyone wins," Mischa smiles warmly. She glances down at her uncle. "It's nearly time. Should we all walk outside?"

"I'll be along shortly," Robert smiles, "Mischa, why don't you show Will what Hannibal has done with his arch?"

Will nods to him, smiles at his friends. Mischa waits by the door with an expectant expression.

Pulling on his jacket and accepting the single white rose Robert hands him for his lapel, Will follows her with a smile. When he steps outside, he sees a taxi pulling up, and a familiar stooped figure emerging.

"Just a moment," Will murmurs to Mischa, crossing the lot. "Peter. You decided to come!"

His friend nods, ducking his head slightly. "Only - for the ceremony." He's even wearing a mildly wrinkled linen dress shirt under his habitual cardigan. Will honestly feels a bit emotional, especially when Peter offers him a handshake. "Is that all right?"

"Of course. We'll be down by the dock," he tells him gently. "There are chairs, unless you'd like to stay on the patio up here with the harpist." That striking individual, a sturdy young woman with a swirled updo and a fanciful feathered hair ornament, is already set up on the brick patio, softly playing various classical pieces. Will thinks he sees a photographer hovering too, taking photos on the deck.

Peter nods. "Thank you, W-Will. And best wishes."

When he's rounded the building, Will nods at Mischa. "Check on him for me after the ceremony, if you don't mind? Make sure he has everything he needs?"

"Of course," she murmurs, "Now - come with me."

Will follows her down the gentle slope toward the water. He's proud of the arch, and he'd only caught a glimpse on the way in. Now, it's dressed in enough flowers that Will knows Hannibal has made a florist somewhere very happy indeed, antique roses and peonies and among the pale petals, scarlet orchids like pricks of blood on white skin.

There's an abundance of blooms, spilling down the sides of the archway, down to the ground and in a soft circle that makes their altar. The petals flutter in the breeze, disturbed by bees, glowing in the sun and reflecting in the water beyond.

He takes a breath. "Wow."

"He hoped you'd say that." She hangs gently on his shoulders. "Let me go tell him you're here, and the officiant, and we'll get you hitched."

Will looks back at her, the familiar features cast on her face. She's so similar to Hannibal, but so different, buoyant to his heaviness, soft where he's statuesque.

"I'm ready," he tells her, feeling fondness bubble up inside.

"Good. I will act as usher."

Will nods, running a nervous hand through his hair and turning to look back up the lawn. He can see Mischa herding everyone outside, and he takes up his spot at the end of one of the designated paths to the altar - two short walks to the arch. No central aisle.

The minister walks in with Beverly and Alana, taking his place under the arch. Alana, Beverly, and Robert all come to their seats, eventually followed by Murasaki, who looks like a work of art as she drifts to sit beside Robert. Will can see Peter has found a seat on the patio, and he knows the photographer is circling, though the young man is unbelievably unobtrusive.

Will hears a glissando from the harp, and lifts his gaze and sees Hannibal striding across the lawn. Then, he can't look away: he looks like a figure from a dream, glowing gold against the rich cream of his suit, he's magnificent. He looks like an angel who's descended among them. Will's cheeks hurt from smiling.

"Hannibal," he murmurs.

He can see Hannibal is not smiling, but his eyes are brimming already. That makes Will automatically choke up. Their eyes meet as they look across the small space at one another.

At Hannibal's elbow, Mischa brings up the rear, and she kisses her brother on the cheek before sneaking to sit with the others.

The harpist set up on the dock nearby plays part of a half-familiar aria. He'll ask Hannibal later.

At Hannibal's nod, Will walks forward as he does, and they meet in the middle, automatically reaching for one another. Hannibal's tears have long since spilled over. It makes Will fight his own, offering a watery grin.

"Realizing your mistake?"

"In waiting so long," Hannibal replies, tone gently reproachful.

Will grins. They turn to the officiant, fingers laced, and let the words flow over them.

Will says the words he's asked to, but he never looks away from Hannibal's face. He can barely tear them away even when Alana and Mischa bring them both their rings, but he spares them both a smile anyway. Then they're on, and Will can't imagine how his hand ever looked right without this band of gold.

He glances from their hands to his husband's face - the title only lacking the final words.

"By the power vested in me by the state of Virginia, I now pronounce you married."

Those words. Will feels them wash over him like a cool current, leaving him clean. Shining, new.

"You may kiss your husband," the minister adds with a smile in his voice.

"Finally," Will murmurs, pressing in to kiss Hannibal. He feels warm hands sliding around his waist to pull him in. There's applause. Will hears Beverly whooping like they're in a football stadium, which gets him laughing helplessly.

Resting his head on Hannibal's chest, he turns his head to look. Beverly and Mischa have taken it upon themselves to make use of the baskets of loose flower blooms on their chairs, throwing them.

"Nothing fancy, huh?" Will whispers to Hannibal.

"I apologize, the attendees went into the double digits with the photographer," Hannibal whispers back. "But the harpist is going home after the recessional."

"Not staying for dinner?" Will grins.

"It's her wife's birthday," Hannibal replies, then kisses him again. "We'll make do with recorded music for dinner."

"Really lowering the standards, mm?"

"Nothing else matters but you," Hannibal corrects softly.

"The feeling is mutual, Doctor Lecter-Graham."

Hannibal smiles. "Let's go home, Mister Lecter-Graham." Then, he adds - "After some photos, of course."

"Of course," Will echoes with a knowing smile. He wraps his arms under Hannibal's jacket carefully and nudges their noses together, hands spanning his warm waist. "I love you."

He feels Hannibal's cheek press against his forehead.

"And I, you."

They stay that way for a moment and then turn to their guests.

"Photos, and then champagne and toasts back at home. And, of course, cake."

"All right," Will confirms.

"Sounds good!" Beverly enthuses. She grins when the photographer snaps a candid of her and Alana.

After that, they're herded together in front of the arch, flower petals disrupted by the gentle wind, catching in hair and dress hems.

Will floats through the photos, aware only of Hannibal's hand in his. He's almost certain he'll look demented in them all, ceaselessly smiling. He doesn't even care. All he cares about is Hannibal. And Hannibal doesn't leave his side, not once. Even for the photos with his family, he immediately insists Will be in them too, though there was no question he would be.

It goes quicker than he expected. And Will is still buoyed by all the electric realization that this is real and theirs to keep.

After the pictures, they walk back to the cars together, though Will is sidetracked by Peter touching his wrist in the parking lot, his taxi still waiting.

"Peter." Will takes his hand and squeezes quickly. "Thank you so much for coming."

"Thank you for inviting me," Peter says softly, "but I have to go now, okay?"

"Of course. Get home safe."

With a little smile, Peter turns away, heading toward his ride. "Give Fred my love?"

"Of course!"

After waving him off, Will goes back to the family, and his husband, letting himself be herded to the car after many hugs and handshakes.

"No horse and carriage?" Will asks, pretending to be scandalized.

Hannibal smiles. "They don't do hour-long journeys."

"I suppose that's fair." Will lets his head rest against Hannibal's shoulder.

"I was disappointed too." Will figures he means it, so he just smiles. "A joke, Will."

"You can tell me about the menu in the car," Will offers.

"Yes, you'll come with me. Mischa has rented her own for a few days."

"Perfect," Will whispers.

He's selfishly glad to be alone with him again. He's sure it's by design, and stupidly grateful for the fact. So much so that when they're finally in the car he has to reach over the gearbox to kiss Hannibal. So many kisses, each one new. Hannibal is laughing soft and warm against his lips.

"Soon, love," he promises. "Let me feed you first."

"I can't wait to see this cake," Will sighs, not quite able to let go of Hannibal yet, "do you know how perfect you are? Do you know how much I admire you?"

"Yes," Hannibal murmurs. "As much as I do you."

He's getting watery again, and in turn that makes Will feel flushed. He lets himself settle back into the plush front seat of the Bentley.

Hannibal sets off, heading their cheerful little convoy. He plays soft music on the car stereo and lets Will hold his hand over the center console. Will looks out the window, though his gaze continually slides back to Hannibal.

"Lot of flowers," he murmurs.

"I like flowers," Hannibal replies. "They did a good job, didn't they?"

"They looked beautiful. You looked better."

"You looked radiant," Hannibal answers. "You still do."

Will grins at him wide.

"We'll have to thank Madame Varma for that."

"I already sent her some flowers," Hannibal smiles.

"Of course you did." Will squeezes his hand. "Did you... make favors?"

"I did," Hannibal replies, with a slight smile.

"What did you make?"

"Well... I admit they're some rather fancy macarons."

"Rather fancy," Will chuckles.

"Edible gold leaf is involved, the ingredients are all pronounceable," Hannibal translates.

"Even to me?"

A soft chuckle." Yes, love."

"Do... I get a fancy macaron?"

"Yes, love," Hannibal replies." In fact, you get several."

"All right, just checking," Will grins. "Glad I agreed to all this now."

"And all it took was some sweets. I see."

"And a lot of flowers," Will agrees, looking at the band on his finger. He reaches out his hand and takes Hannibal's again.

Back at the house, Hannibal takes chilled flutes out of the wine fridge and opens a magnum with a showy pop of cork that earns a round of applause. When they all have a glass poured, gathered at the island in the kitchen where the crimson orchid Will bought Hannibal for their first date still sits center place, he delicately taps his for attention.

"This Dom Perignon was given to me as a gift, by my Aunt and Uncle," he explains to the room at large, "and I've been saving it for a special occasion. You can imagine my pleasure at realizing, on unearthing it after the move, that it is the same age as Will."

Will blushes. Beverly cheers.

"Is this your speech?" He asks Hannibal, half under his breath." You gonna make me cry again?"

"I suppose we'll find out."

"Saps," Bev heckles affectionately.

Hannibal waits until the chuckles die down to continue. "Obviously, I now have a deep well of gratitude for that year, and that occurrence. I truly feel that I have found my other half. I thought perhaps I should adopt it as my own birthday as well."

Will laughs helplessly, shaking his head. "You look good enough to pass for ten year younger."

"I'll take that as a compliment, thank you."

"As you should." Will smiles and waits for the rest of the speech.

"Like this champagne, though," Hannibal continues primly, "there can only be one batch. I am fortunate enough once more to have received this one as a gift. Mister William Lecter-Graham, I will be sure to keep you safe, and celebrate with you often. To us."

"To us," Will murmurs, lifting his glass with everyone else.

"Will's turn!" Mischa says, when the little clinks and cheers have died down.

Will laughs and rubs the back of his neck. "I don't have a bottle of Dom, Hannibal's birth year or otherwise. And I don't have the wedding arch I made, because the grounds crew won't bring it back until tomorrow. But I do have a spot in the yard picked out for it, and I made a bench for underneath it. I'm hoping it can become a spot for us to sit together and just... enjoy one another, and our home."

He grins helplessly when Hannibal takes his hand.

"And I hope you know that I never thought I'd find you, and I was - I was strangely okay with that, *until* I found you. You have changed me, irrevocably. I hope to never be the way I was before." His eyes are stinging again. "I hope you know that having to spend twenty-four hours without you was sheer torture, and I'm never doing it again."

They're both teary-eyed now. Will thinks maybe everyone is. He feels vulnerable, and raw, but he knows Hannibal *sees* what it means.

"That's all I have," he murmurs. "I'm so happy."

"So am I," Hannibal assures. He puts his glass down only to cup Will's cheeks and press their foreheads together. More clinking, and they obediently kiss.

Will pulls away to wipe his eyes. "Thank you for coming, all of you."

"Our pleasure," Robert answers.

"So rare we get an opportunity to see Hannibal, even more to see him so happy," Murasaki puts in gently.

Will glances up and meets her placid gaze. She raises her glass to him. He supposes that's her blessing. Not that he needed it, he thinks it means something to Hannibal, though.

"Now, I have taken the liberty of preparing us a menu for this evening," Hannibal announces, putting his arm around Will. "Please, sit down, drink, and let me cook for you."

He leans down to kiss Will one more time.

"I'll go see to the dogs, quickly," Will smiles.

"Of course, love."

Will leaves his drink and ducks out to the backyard, the only place around here with a fence that could hold eight dogs. He has never been so glad of their training; they circle for pets but don't jump, and he checks the collected food and water bowls and replenishes their contents.

"At least it's sunny," he tells them, giving a few last ear scratches. "I'm sure you'll have visitors after dinner."

At least if Beverly and champagne are involved. Alana won't even need the champagne.

Back inside then, to watch Hannibal, and let his glass be gradually emptied and filled. He can't help but reflect on how different everything seems - not just the inside of the house but the people inside it. No more camper bed, no more drinking himself to sleep. It's a home, and he's built some of it with his own two hands; and it's filled with people who care about him, and about them - the Lecter-Grahams.

Will lingers in the doorway of the extension for a moment, simply watching Hannibal as he starts to prepare their meal whilst effortlessly maintaining the flow of the conversation. Beverly takes drinks back out to Alana and Mischa; Murasaki stays to speak to Hannibal. Will suddenly becomes aware that she hasn't seen him, and he debates quickly on whether to clear his throat, or go outside. He feels frozen in place.

Murasaki puts her hand lightly on Hannibal's forearm, and he bends toward her while he continues his prep, clearly angling to listen.

"I've never seen such happiness in your eyes, Hannibal," she murmurs.

"I have many things to be happy about," he tells her.

"Today in particular, when you've taken a partner in life," Murasaki replies.

"That in particular makes me ecstatically happy, yes."

"Does he know-"

"He knows everything. Sometimes without me even telling him."

"Everything," she repeats.

Hannibal looks at her. "Everything."

Will sees her shiver, nearly invisibly, and he knows without a doubt that this was the woman who'd denied him unconditional acceptance in his youth.

"And he... understands?"

"Yes, Murasaki," Hannibal murmurs.

She bows her head. "Then I'm glad."

Those three words are enough to convey the completeness of her blessing; her surrender. Hannibal wipes his hands and touches her shoulder gently.

"I forgive you," he whispers.

Will has to stifle a sigh. Murasaki covers his hand with her own. Will watches Hannibal's face. He looks warm and soft.

"He's changed you," she tells him.

That elicits a soft smile. "And for once, I let him."

"Yes," Murasaki nods. "I... hope you continue to do so."

"He is an ocean. I'm a bluff. We constantly change one another." Hannibal turns back to his task. "I am nourished daily by the changing landscape of our life."

Murasaki murmurs something in Japanese, and withdraws. Hannibal watches her go for a moment, and looks briefly wistful. Then he turns, and sees Will.

Will looks down, abashed at being caught eavesdropping. But Hannibal is across the room in two strides, taking him in his arms.

"Hello, husband."

"Hannibal," Will whispers.

"What is it?"

"I'm sorry I listened."

"I knew you were there."

"You didn't show it."

"You didn't announce yourself."

Of course. Hannibal is always in control. Will sighs and lets himself relax into his arms. Hannibal immediately folds them around him; strokes his hair.

"I love you to the depths of my soul," he murmurs.

Will bites his lip. "I know you do." He cups Hannibal's shoulders. "I feel the same."

"I know," Hannibal murmurs. His eyes carry a smile.

"I love you like nothing on earth," Will impresses.

"Oh, Will," Hannibal sighs. He touches Will's cheek. They lean together. Will allows himself to finally feel at home.

"Dinner already smells good," he whispers.

"It was designed with you in mind, my love."

"And you, I hope."

"Fusion cuisine, if you will."

"Is that so, Doctor Lecter-Graham? That sounds a little dirty."

"It can be. We can go upstairs right now."

"Tempting, but not with your aunt and uncle sat on our couch."

Hannibal looks unruffled by the thought. "It's not unheard of, at a wedding."

"It would be rude," Will reminds him, but he's smiling.

"Now you're not playing fair, Mister Lecter-Graham."

"Life isn't fair." Will grins up at Hannibal.

"That makes perfect sense." Hannibal sounds as besotted as ever. Will feels nearly boneless with appreciation.

Will is hindered in replying by Beverly appearing to retrieve more champagne. "You two need to stop necking and come drink with us," she scolds playfully.

"That's us, necking."

"I have eyes," she answers. "And I'm a trained investigator."

"God help us," Will mutters to Hannibal, "she's figured out we're involved."

"The wedding helped, honestly." She takes a bottle out of the refrigerator and winks.

"I told you it was a bad idea," Will stage whispers to Hannibal.

"We've spoiled the mystery," he murmurs back.

"Clearly."

He leans in shamelessly for one more kiss. Then, he goes to help Beverly.

After a dinner that Will is thankfully not too blurry to appreciate, and some pleasant conversation, things begin to wind down. Everyone is full and happy. The dogs get to come back inside.

There's a cake, of course - Beverly has been eyeing it longingly since she walked into the dining room, and Will has to admit it's worth the wait. It's a traditional airy almond sponge with what Hannibal tells them is a chocolate whiskey ganache and fig jam between the layers. It's decorated with both a subtle wood grain and with gilded figs, which honestly seems perfect. It tastes perfect too, when Will and Hannibal submit to Beverly and Mischa's insistence that they feed one another the first bites. Will endeavors to eat it for breakfast again tomorrow.

*

Later, Robert is the first to announce he's ready to return to the hotel. It takes a while to gather his and Murasaki's things, and get them settled into Mischa's rental car, with handshakes and congratulations and a few more embraces. After that, Alana convinces a slightly inebriated Bev that it's time to go home.

"Good night Will. Good night Hannibal," she says at the door, eyes darting to Will afterwards with amusement.

"Night, Alana. Bev. You let us know when you're home?"

"Of course," Alana murmurs. "And call me about the dogs when you're ready, all right?"

"I will, thank you." He kisses her cheek, and then hands her off to Hannibal to bid goodnight to Bev.

After accepting another enthusiastic hug, he lets himself lean into Hannibal in the doorway. From there they wave off both cars, Hannibal tucking his hand tight into the pocket of Will's waistcoat. The dogs obediently stay on the front porch, but mill about their feet.

"We got married today," Will observes, "can you believe it?" He tips his head back for a peek at Hannibal, practically glowing.

"I've been waiting a long time," he tells Will.

"How long, would you say?" Will teases gently.

"All my life," Hannibal whispers. He steers Will in against him. "I have a request."

"What can I do for you, Doctor?" Will smiles.

"Had circumstance permitted, it would have been today, but I don't think our guests would appreciate it - I would like to go back to the lake tomorrow."

"On the boat?" Will asks softly.

"Please."

"That sounds good, Hannibal. Let's do it." He leans up to kiss him softly; can feel Hannibal's answering smile. "Can't deny my husband, can I?"

"Please don't."

"All right." Fingers sliding into the softness of his hair, Will pulls him down to kiss him again. "Doctor Lecter-Graham, is it time to go upstairs?"

"It certainly sounds that way, doesn't it?"

"It does to me."

"Come on, beloved." Hannibal kisses him.

"I'll follow you anywhere," Will quips, linking their fingers.

They call in the dogs and lock up for the night, and then head upstairs, leaving the last few straggling glasses to wash up in the morning.

Pausing on the landing, Will squeezes Hannibal's hand. "I'm going to grab a quick shower, all right?"

"I... had hoped to undress you," Hannibal says softly.

Will bites his lip against a smile. "That can still happen?"

Hannibal tries to give him a stern look.

"Come on," Will teases, tugging gently at his bow tie. "You can undress me in the bathroom y'know."

"Then I will," Hannibal murmurs.

It becomes undressing each other. Both of them move slow, careful of the fine tailoring. They hang up their suits for dry-cleaning, and then Will coaxes Hannibal into the shower. Even so, it's a relatively chaste affair: their bedroom seems the better option for their wedding night. Still, it feels good to have the familiar hands lathering and rinsing, lips brushing and sealing, parting with rushed breaths, their bodies connected from thigh to chest.

Will kisses Hannibal's wet shoulder and rests his cheek there for a few moments, just quiet.

"Beloved," Hannibal wraps his arms around him. Will makes a quiet noise of assent.

"When we're in here," he murmurs, "in this stall, I forget everything else exists."

"Do you?" Hannibal murmurs in reply.

"I do. I never want to leave."

"I suppose that explains why we end up here so often."

"Also hygiene, and we can't be apart for longer than ten minutes," Will points out.

"True enough." Hannibal smiles down at him. "I missed you last night, as well."

"What did you do with your folks?"

"Just talked. They caught me up on old connections, Mischa told us all what she's been up to."

"How was your room?"

"Lonely," Hannibal murmurs.

"I missed you so much I talked to you," Will admits, "in my head."

"Oh, Will," Hannibal sighs, leaning down to kiss him. "What did we discuss?"

"Dinner, and where we will go on our honeymoon."

"Well, we've already had dinner. Where are we going on our honeymoon?" Hannibal smiles.

"What do you think about Italy?"

"You know I love Italy. Any particular part?"

"Any you like. All of it."

"I would very much like to show you Florence," Hannibal murmurs.

"Florence then." Will reaches behind him to turn off the water and steers him out of the shower with a smile. "Come on, husband. Bed."

They dry off quickly and go back into their room. Hannibal steps over and lights a few candles on his nightstand, the copper wall behind the bed showing the dancing lights. Will can't help but smile as he watches, turning a bit shy. No acting tonight, no crime and punishment. Just them.

He slips into bed, and when he turns back to the room, there are even more candles lit.

"Hannibal," he whispers.

"Look up at the copper," Hannibal tells him. "Look how beautiful the room you made me is."

"I didn't make it," Will laughs softly, "you did."

"We made it together."

"You make me," Will murmurs.

"And you make me," Hannibal replies.

Will urges him closer. "Come make me now."

Hannibal hesitates for a moment, unconcernedly nude, and Will feels himself being memorized. He's doing the same. His eyes travel up the carved plains of Hannibal's body; the curve of thigh muscles, and the lean climb to his hips. Bare softness in his waist, and well-maintained strength in his core and arms. Tan and furred and perfect.

"Come here," Will tries again.

This time, his husband joins him on the bed. Splayed gracefully on his side, Hannibal leans up on his elbow to kiss Will, giving him opportunity to touch the tender inside of his bicep.

"I love these parts of you," Will mutters against his mouth, "the tender parts."

"There are quite a few," Hannibal smiles.

"I know." He leans and kisses the skin there.

"They're all yours," Hannibal murmurs as, palm sliding against Will's bare hip, he guides him closer against his body.

Their lips meet again, clinging this time. It's too easy to pull Hannibal on top; arch up and wind his thighs around his middle. Will is utterly luxuriating in this new certainty - as if there were any doubt before that they would be together always.

Hannibal seems delighted to be guided and moved. He rolls his hips, and Will gasps his approval, rolling his own, up in gentle rocks as he pulls their mouths together again. No rush, now. They're taking their time with each other. Will is electrified by every brush of skin. It feels new, while remaining utterly familiar. It feels like they have all the time in the world. And Will wants to spend it like this, with all of Hannibal's hardness and softness, his to enjoy.

"I'd like to taste you," Hannibal whispers.

"I'm all yours."

"Good." He dips then, pressing a few plush kisses to Will's throat.

Will sifts his silky hair through his fingers. It's difficult to let him slide down his body, despite what he said: he doesn't want to relinquish that weight.

Hannibal notices, and laughs softly. "Beloved. I'll be back."

"All right..." he still fails to keep the slight whine out of his voice.

Hannibal bends and kisses the soft stretch of Will's stomach as Will’s hands cup his waist and watches. The silver starburst in his hair is so bright in the dim light of the candles. Will touches it again, trails fingertips down to his cheek. He's hypnotized by Hannibal's soft red mouth; his tongue gently touching between his hips as he shifts down onto his belly. Will squeezes him gently with his thighs and shivers when Hannibal drags the grain of his cheek against the inside of one.

"Baby," he whispers.

"Darling," Hannibal answers. He inhales slowly before setting his mouth to Will's skin.

Watching him suck Will's cock is nearly better than feeling it. He looks like he's having a spiritual experience. Lashes down, lips soft and tongue mindfully working. Will lets out a pleased gasp of breath.

"God," he slurs, hips tilting.

Hannibal takes a moment to slip fingers inside of him, to give him something else to rock down on. That just makes Will swear and shake. He whispers Hannibal's name, reaching for him. He wants this but he wants *more* besides.

Hannibal stays where he is, still gently sucking, tongue working.

"Hannibal," Will groans. He sees a flash of those golden eyes under pale lashes. "Please. Come up here now?"

"Yes, husband," Hannibal murmurs, smiling and pushing himself up.

Will snakes a hand down between them to touch him, shivering at the heat and weight of him in his hand. Hannibal makes a pleased sound in his throat.

"I want you inside me," Will murmurs. "Please."

"Of course," Hannibal whispers.

They trade another few long kisses.

"Tell me how you want me," Hannibal whispers in his ear.

"I don't care. Any way."

Hannibal distracts him by peppering kisses all over his ribs and chest. It's most effective, a delicious mix of heady and ticklish. Will tips his head back and moans. A firm squeeze to his shoulder and Hannibal is coaxing him to curl up on his side.

Will does as he's bid, still reluctant to let go of him for any small length of time, but Hannibal only slips behind and wraps an arm around him, clasping their fingers. Their bodies aligned, Will half twists to tip their cheeks together even as he lifts his hips. He can feel Hannibal’s eagerness against his thigh, hot and hard and slipping easily between.

Effortlessly, he presses in, and Will groans at the feeling.

"Yes," he gasps. "Just like that."

Hannibal hooks his chin against his shoulder and holds him close as he starts to rock, humming when Will turns his head to kiss his cheek.

"God - perfect, you're -" he's breathless all at once.

This angle is perfect to set Will's nerves alight, and he pushes back, more moans spilling free. He's never felt as cherished as he does now, with Hannibal's arms around him, their bodies bracketed and legs tangled as they move together.

Hannibal's thrusts pick up in both speed and force.

"Fuck," Will breathes, "fuck -"

"I love you," Hannibal murmurs into his ear.

"I love you too, so much."

He whimpers it, unable to draw a full breath: Hannibal is moving slow, and deep, drawing shaky moans out of him with every stroke. He moves like he has nothing else to do but

reduce Will to shaking, and yet to hold him together, all at the same time.

It's too good to rush for more, intense and intimate. Will feels like they're merging, blurring into one. It's such a welcome, rushing convergence. He rocks back, clutching Hannibal's arms tighter around him.

"Faster," he whines.

Hannibal makes a low noise of assent, one of his hands fixed on Will's hip as he drives quicker.

Gasping his approval, Will twists to kiss him again. Hannibal is cradling him, one hand cupping the front of his throat delicately. His breath against Will's lips is as ragged as Will's own.

"You feel so good," Will slurs quietly.

"All yours," Hannibal murmurs back.

"Perfect, baby."

Will squeezes his eyes shut, pink lips parting. He's entirely gluttonous for the feeling of being held and known and loved. He drinks it in like the driest desert soil.

When Hannibal tips him gently up over his lap, never unseating him from his cock, Will braces his knees and rolls his hips. He feels Hannibal's hand rub up and down his spine, his hand slipping up into Will’s hair and gently knotting.

Will lets his head fall back at the tug. The sinking, dragging push of the new position makes him cry out. He’s grinding down, but Hannibal's hands still do most of the work, pulling Will down into every thrust, their hips moving faster and smoother together.

Will reaches a near-plateau of rushing, pounding sensation but he doesn't shy; instead lets himself slowly down against Hannibal's body, his well-muscled chest against Will’s back, and feels him slow once more. His arms wind around Will.

"You feel like heaven."

The words pull Will out of his haze a little, make him smile and arch against Hannibal's body. "What does heaven feel like?"

"Heat and light and electricity," Hannibal murmurs.

"A light bulb?" Will whispers, and gets a little slap for his trouble. It just makes him jolt, and moan.

"An endless circuit of sensation," Hannibal corrects softly.

"That was my next guess-"

When Hannibal's hand creeps down between his hips, he nods quick. Just a bit of pressure sends him flying. His hips squirm between the two points of stimulation when Hannibal strokes his cock quick and smooth, Hannibal inside him rubbing just right, hot and deep.

"Yes," he gasps, as Hannibal kisses behind his ear.

Now he feels the electricity too, the shock of it travelling up his spine while Hannibal keeps moving.

"Hannibal," Will hisses. He’s tensing, his back arching, thighs clenching. He calls Hannibal's name again.

"Show me," he whispers against Will's cheek, hand stroking faster and harder until Will quakes and shouts once more, feeling release come in a rush.

Beneath him, he can feel Hannibal's breaths, his supporting hand on Will's side flexing. Will’s name is a whisper on his lips and, shivering, Will twists to kiss him. Hannibal's hips surge helplessly as he groans.

Will shifts, teeth bared against the sensation.

"Fuck-"

He sucks in a breath and swears again, voice gone thready. It's too much all at once, and he reluctantly stalls Hannibal, climbing off him delicately and slipping down between his knees, smiling when Hannibal arches up automatically.

Will takes him into his mouth with a sigh. So hard, so perfect, tasting of Will and the bitter tang of precome. Will works him with mouth and hand, gratified when Hannibal's hands curl into his hair, his breaths quick above. So close.

Will moans softly in his throat; he can taste him getting closer, and harder. He strokes more firmly with his hand, feeling Hannibal's fingers tug his curls. When his breaths change in pitch, Will *knows* he's coming. He pulls back far enough to take it into his mouth, moaning at the taste, all tang and salt. He swallows slowly, running his tongue over his teeth, but he doesn't quite manage to ease off him just yet, just gently sucking. He's still so warm and tempting.

He only stops when he feels Hannibal twitch away, overstimulated, and as soon as he pulls off he's hauled bodily into Hannibal's arms.

They stay close like that for a few breathless seconds, rolling their hips lazily. Will can feel their chests slipping with a sheen of sweat. He kisses Hannibal desperately, fingers sliding into his hair, Hannibal holding him just as tightly.

"My boy," he whispers, kissing his ear.

"Yours forever," Will tells him.

"You already were."

"I know," Will murmurs.

He smiles at the possessiveness. It's echoed in his own heart, after all. He clutches him tighter at the thought, and Hannibal soothes a hand through his hair.

"Thank you for today," Will murmurs. "You made it perfect. Every moment."

"So have you." Hannibal kisses his temple. "I never thought I'd find anyone whose company I preferred to my own."

"I never thought I'd find anyone at all, Hannibal. Now I have you, and it's like finding a diamond in the sand."

Their cheeks rasp, and Hannibal squeezes him close. "It's all diamonds now."

Epilogue

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

It's a clear, bright day on the lake the next day. Hannibal has brought aboard a suspiciously large picnic hamper. Will has brought aboard himself, and a bag of clean clothing and several towels. Just in case.

"What is even in that thing?" he asks, eyeing the hamper again.

"Just a few special treats," Hannibal demurs.

Will raises his eyebrows. "Something dirty then."

"Will," Hannibal scolds.

"Am I wrong?"

"For two people married in the eyes of God and the Commonwealth?" Hannibal teases gently.

"God was watching? Why didn't you say so?" He laughs at Hannibal's momentary gape. "Baby, I'm kidding."

He leans in to kiss his cheek, and Hannibal smiles and touches his hair.

"Eyes on the road."

"That's no fun."

"No, watery death does have a more dramatic appeal."

"I'm not prepared to go at this point," Will teases.

"I would find it at least agreeable we were married first."

"What a romantic." He means it. So does Hannibal; he's sure.

He feels him lean into his side as he steers them toward the little island in the center of the lake. Their island, Will thinks. His heart feels overfull.

They dock and Hannibal gathers the basket while Will fastens the boat. They're better prepared than last time, and Will brings the blankets.

It's a lovely day, and he's delighted to be here. His shoulders feel loose, his head light. His ring glints on his finger. Hannibal walks easily at his side.

"Lunch first?" He asks Will cheerfully.

"Oh, yes, I can't wait to see what's in the hamper."

"You're incredibly lucky you are so beautiful," Hannibal reproaches him gently.

"Am I?"

"Yes, you are. I might not be so inclined to tolerate your mocking."

"I think you would."

A little chuckle at that. "Perhaps."

Daintily, Hannibal kneels on the blanket Will sets out, and then starts to open Tupperware. In turn, Will finds a bottle of wine and an opener and puts himself to work.

Two delicate little glasses, and they're sat overlooking their secret pool, the sun dancing off the surface in great tiles of gold, the weather being unseasonably warm for the time of year. Will takes a breath and lets it out slowly, smiling as Hannibal fills them both a plate. He can see just from watching him that Hannibal is incredibly content. They both are.

"This is delicious," Will tells him, after taking his first bite with relish.

"Thank you, love."

"That's my line."

"We can share it." Hannibal settles back, eating neatly.

Will still can't take his eyes off him. He nearly misses his own mouth a couple of times. Thankfully, Hannibal doesn’t notice – or kindly pretends not to.

"Used to come here when I wanted to feel like I was the only person on Earth," Will admits eventually, half-shy.

"And now we are the only couple on Earth."

"Yeah." Will sighs. "Used to think about what would happen if I stayed, if no one noticed. This soft little pod of silence."

"Do you mind sharing your silence?"

"No," Will says honestly, "I think that's why I'm so surprised."

"Still surprised?" Hannibal asks softly.

"Sometimes. Think I'm always waiting to stop feeling like I don't belong with you - but I'm grateful I've got you. I'm grateful you don't know that yet."

"I know you feel that way," Hannibal murmurs. "But it's not true. You do belong with me, and you don't even need a ring or a certificate for that."

Will nods, keeping his head down.

"I know I can trust you, even if I'm not certain."

"Always," Hannibal murmurs.

They exchange soft smiles. Will nudges their shoulders together and eats more, and Hannibal lets him extend the silence. They eat, and savor, and Will lies back when he's done with a sigh.

"Are naps allowed at this picnic?"

"Of course." Hannibal settles into his side. He doesn't even tidy away the dishes first.

Beaming at him, Will wraps an arm over him and pulls him closer.

"Love you," he whispers.

Hannibal kisses his forehead. "I love you."

"Is there something dirty in the hamper?" Will whispers through a grin.

"Do you want there to be something dirty in the hamper?"

"I just want to know if there is."

"Why don't you check," Will can hear Hannibal's answering smile.

Sighing fondly, Will noses into him. "I will soon. M'enjoying this."

"Yes," Hannibal agrees softly, settling with him.

It's warm and indulgent here. Will can hear grasshoppers, and birdsong, and the lap of water. Insects buzz, but it's breezy enough to keep them mostly at bay. Will feels it ruffle his curls - or maybe that's Hannibal - and smiles.

"Let's stay here," he murmurs.

"On the deserted island?" Hannibal sounds amused.

"Yes. Just us."

"You'd miss the dogs," Hannibal tells him.

"I guess."

He pushes his face against the side of Hannibal's neck, feeling his hand push up under the hem of his t-shirt and pet at the skin there; the dimples of his lower back.

"We can come whenever you want," he whispers.

"I know."

Will sighs, eyes closed in content. He breathes in the scent of grass and Hannibal's cologne. He could fall asleep like this. No one, in fact, is stopping him. He dozes in and out, stirred by the birds and the occasional flutter of the breeze; splash of a frog. He's not sure if Hannibal sleeps; but he's still and relaxed beside him.

It occurs to Will, in his half-dreamy state, that Hannibal hardly ever wakes up without him now, like he doesn't want to be awake if Will isn't there too. Will agrees. He noses in close to him as he comes back to himself, nuzzling.

"Hannibal," he whispers.

"Will," Hannibal answers, equally quiet.

"Gonna show me what's in the basket now?"

"By all means take a look."

Will gets to his knees and shuffles over until he can pull it closer and peek in.

He lifts out a couple of tubs of leftovers and finds the canvas bag in the bottom. Inside, there's a fancy glass jar with a handwritten label. "For Will."

The liquid inside is clear, and Will opens it up and sniffs, curious. It smells fantastic - woodsy and clean.

"Is this lube?"

He sees the hint of a smile on his husband's lips.

"Fancy lube," Will clarifies to himself, reading the bottle again. "Did you have this made? Does it do something special?"

"Yes, I had it made. It's merely high-quality and scented to my specifications."

Will looks at it, and then shakes his head. "No KY for you, huh? And what is this for?"

"I'm sure you're aware of the benefits of appropriate lubrication, Will."

"I think I need a doctor to refresh me on the subject."

Hannibal's eyes crinkle slightly. "May I suggest a demonstration?"

"You're incredibly obliging."

"For my husband? Of course."

"Call me your husband again." Will presses in to kiss him, handing Hannibal the open jar with care.

"My husband, who has made me the luckiest man in the world," Hannibal murmurs.

"God, I can't believe you ended up with a handyman and think you're lucky."

"The luckiest. Now let me show you."

"No protests here." He watches as Hannibal dips a few fingers into the fragrant jar.

"Take off your clothes."

He manages to make it sound throaty and seductive, and not desperate, which is how Will feels while he does as he's bid, throwing the offending items on top of the picnic basket and going willingly with Hannibal's hands when he's bare.

He guides Will into his lap, looking demure and gentlemanly and not at all like he's about to do what Will thinks he is.

Filled with heady anticipation, Will just waits: Hannibal can do whatever he likes.

For a moment, he seems content just to look at him. Then he shifts his hands, still as deft as a surgeon's, and Will sighs as his thumb whirls over the rising flush of his cock, middle finger teasing past his cunt and back between his cheeks.

Will can feel his muscles rippling as he clenches involuntarily. "Hannibal," he says, softly shocked, and Hannibal shushes him as he presses gently.

Their mouths tip together helplessly. Hannibal swallows his next noise, a full moan. His finger slides in easily, and when Hannibal tilts his wrist, deeper.

"Oh-"

His fingers light up so many nerves at once. Will shifts to encourage him, breathing quick already. He's desperate for more. The way he feels, bare to Hannibal's clothed, the sun shining on his skin and the open air caressing, is enough to render him breathless even without those clever fingers working inside him.

"Hannibal, I'm more than ready," he murmurs.

"I know you are, but having my fingers inside of you is - something entirely precious to me."

"Mm. Tell me more."

"The way you feel," Hannibal sighs, easing his hand back to press into the tight hole with two instead, making Will gasp, "silky and hot. Greedy, even." He kisses his bare shoulder, entirely tender. "I like you greedy."

"That's how you make me feel," Will gasps, bucking his hips down. He can feel himself getting wetter, and harder. "Hannibal, I'm aching-"

"Tell me what to do."

"Fuck - give me more." He clasps his shoulders, bowing his cheek against Hannibal's temple.

Ever happy to indulge him, Hannibal nuzzles against his jaw, tipping Will gently onto his back on the blanket and leaning down to take him into his mouth.

"Oh *fuck*," Will hisses, hips bridging up.

Hannibal suckles him slowly, rocking his fingers in and out. He's so good, Will is nearly mindless with it, breath stuttering out in a near sob.

"Hannibal-" Hannibal swirls his tongue soothingly in answer. "Hannibal, please, I need you to fuck me-"

Seems like those are the magic words. His husband pulls back, lips glistening, eyes dark. When he carefully extracts his fingers, Will hurriedly leans up to start unfastening his flies, and as soon as Hannibal's cock springs free, he reaches for the lube. Will nearly grinds his teeth with impatience, hitching his thighs wide as soon as Hannibal is ready and pulling him down.

Hannibal comes willingly, eyes blown nearly black with his own intensity, and with hands clasping the bracket of Will's hips, he lifts him until his lower back is against Hannibal's knees. Slick and hard, he spreads Will's cheeks and pushes slowly in.

"Fuck-" grasping at the blanket beneath them with one hand, Will twists the other into Hannibal's hand. "God, Hannibal..."

"My love," Hannibal breathes.

He feels huge like this, and he looks divine, still a perfect gentleman even buried to the hilt inside Will. He looks up at Hannibal with all his love on his face, and with his own smile reverent, Hannibal starts to move, knocking the breath out of both of them.

The sensations are different like this, somehow more electric. Will feels oversensitized by the feeling of Hannibal's shirttails against his cock and cunt, maddened and enthralled in turn by the friction as he starts to fuck him in earnest. He arches to get more of it; moans his name soft and broken until Hannibal slips a hand between them.

"So big for me, love," he breathes.

"Oh," Will cries. "Keep touching me."

"Of course." He bends to kiss him. Fingers stroking over Will's cock, he rocks his hips until they're fully joined.

Will feels complete, filled and stretched to near overwhelm already. He runs his hands over Hannibal's chest, keeping him close as he moans helplessly into his mouth. The sun beats down on them both, the wind teasing over them. Will shakes as Hannibal thoroughly, skillfully takes him to pieces with long strokes of his hips and hand. He moans out loud into the silence of their island, savoring in turn the rush of Hannibal's breath; the way his hair falls into his eyes with the force of their movements. He's a daydream, intent and disheveled.

"I love you so much," Will breathes.

"Forever," Hannibal answers.

He snaps their hips together faster, jolting another surprised moan out of Will. He's always surprised at how well Hannibal plays his body, never tentative or hesitant, so familiar. And Will can see Hannibal isn't unaffected. The color rises over his cheekbones, across the wings of his clavicles.

Will leans up to kiss them urgently, desperate to taste.

"Please, Hannibal," he whispers.

"What do you need, love?"

"Come with me," Will urges.

An accommodating surge of Hannibal's hips at that, eyes bright. "Of course, Will."

Will licks his lips, pulling him back down for a deep kiss. His entire body seems to pulse with the throes of his approaching orgasm, light and heat that spreads from his core outward. He's so close, and Hannibal is stoking every spark, drawing out more moans, deep and wordless.

Will feels himself pulling tight, closing his eyes against the confetti fall of sunspots printed on his retinas between the trees overhead. They fall over his face like kisses as Hannibal tucks his face against Will's throat.

"Will," he breathes.

"Keep going," he whispers.

"Of course."

Words leave Will then, only touches remaining, Hannibal strumming his nerves like he's plucking strings on his harpsichord, every note clear within a dizzying melody. They cascade through him as he draws up and then releases with a rush.

He feels Hannibal's shaking, stuttered movements as the clenching pulses of Will's body pull him to his own end. Will sets a shaking hand against his chest, feels the thunder of his heart.

"I love you," he murmurs. He sees Hannibal blink, refocus.

"And I you," he breathes, then dips to kiss him, slow and indulgent.

Will pulls him down until they're chest to chest. Rolls his hips one more time to make them both gasp. It caresses his lips like the breeze over his skin.

Finally, reluctantly, Hannibal eases back, though Will whines a little at the sudden emptiness.

"Shh, my love." Hannibal slides fingers down to fill him for a moment, stroking gentle and without direction. Just touches full of love.

Will gasps even so, cock twitching barely with the stimulation.

The circles of his thumb slow until it's the barest pressure, and then Hannibal withdraws again, pressing a kiss to Will's chest; the twin scars below.

"I have a confession to make."

Will looks up at him, still boneless and overwhelmed by emotion. "Hm?"

"I sold the Baltimore house," Hannibal murmurs, "and I booked our honeymoon. I know we said we were going to wait."

"Where are you taking me?" Will murmurs, unconcerned.

"Florence, and then Venice."

"That sounds perfect. How many suits did I end up with for that in the end?" he teases gently.

"Just a few."

"When do we leave?"

"In two days." He smiles. "I called about the dogs too."

"Are they coming with us?"

"No, but Beverly has assured me that, for the very reasonable fee of all the pillow chocolates she could eat, her and Alana will housesit for us."

"Oh," Will laughs, "I feel pretty good about that."

"Good," Hannibal murmurs.

Will beams at him slowly, taking Hannibal's left hand in his own and kissing his ring finger. Hannibal returns the motion.

"Can you believe we're married?" Will whispers. Hannibal chuckles fondly.

"It's starting to sink in."

"Same," Will murmurs.

Their noses brush together in another kiss, and for a while, Hannibal curls around Will protectively, both of them gazing up at the canopy above, hopping birds and green, green leaves against blue, blue sky.

"Want to go for a swim?" Will whispers eventually.

Hannibal kisses his forehead. "That sounds perfect."

"Come on." Will starts to unbutton Hannibal’s rumpled shirt, and he allows himself to be stripped, and thoroughly ogled. "So beautiful," Will sighs. "My distinguished husband."

The corner of his eyes crinkle with his smile. "Will..."

"Yes?"

Smiling warm and besotted, Hannibal just shakes his head, and kisses him once more.

Silently now, they kick away the rest of their clothes and pad into the shallow pool, light bouncing off its disturbed surface. Will watches Hannibal swim to the center, powerful and assured. He looks like some kind of summer god. He never leaves Will's side for long.

"Let's stay here forever," Will murmurs.

Hannibal looks at him over his bare, golden shoulder. "Only if we can move our house here."

"We'll think of something."

"We always do."

Will sighs, the water musical around them as he slides his arms around Hannibal's neck, letting the water buoy him as he winds his legs around his middle to face him.

"We do."

It's nice to be part of a *we*. Will had gotten so used to being a lone unit, and he knows Hannibal had too. It was a long shot that they'd even found one another. A million to one chance.

And they did. And he's so grateful.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you so much for reading, and every comment and kudos, it means the world to us. If you want to be clued in on a special, APOPAN/BTPATS related secret, be sure to check out our twitter this weekend at @printersdeadly.

As ever, we appreciate hearing your thoughts! ♥

Love,

L & Deadly xoxo

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